# NAGUALISM.

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## A STUDY

...IN...

## Native American Folk-lore and History.

....BY....

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# *Nagualism. A Study in Native American Folk-lore and History.*

*By Daniel G. Brinton, M.D.*

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**1.** The words, a *nagual*, *nagualism*, a *nagualist*, have been current in English prose for more than seventy years; they are found during that time in a variety of books published in England and the United States,* yet are not to be discovered in any dictionary of the English language; nor has *Nagualism* a place in any of the numerous encyclopædias or "Conversation Lexicons," in English, French, German or Spanish.

This is not owing to its lack of importance, since for two hundred years past, as I shall show, it has been recognized as a cult, no less powerful than mysterious, which united many and diverse tribes of Mexico and Central America into organized opposition against the government and the religion which had been introduced from Europe; whose members had acquired and were bound together by strange faculties and an occult learning, which placed them on a par with the famed thaumaturgists and theodidacts of the Old World; and which preserved even into our own days the thoughts and forms of a long suppressed ritual.

In several previous publications I have referred briefly to this secret sodality and its aims,† and now believe it worth while to collect my scattered notes and present all that I have found of value about the origin, aims and significance of this Eleusinian Mystery of America. I shall trace its geographical extension and endeavor to discover what its secret influence really was and is.

**2.** The earliest description I find of its particular rites is that which the historian Herrera gives, as they prevailed in 1530, in the province of Cerquin, in the mountainous parts of Honduras. It is as follows:

"The Devil was accustomed to deceive these natives by appearing to them in the form of a lion, tiger. coyote, lizard, snake, bird, or other animal. To these appearances they apply the name *Naguales*, which is as much as to say, guardians or companions; and when such an animal dies, so does the Indian to whom it was assigned. The way such an alliance was formed was thus: The Indian repaired to some very retired spot

* These words occur a number of times in the English translation, published at London in 1822, of Dr. Paul Felix Cabrera's *Textro Critico Americano*. The form *nagual* instead of *nahual*, or *naual*, or *naual* has been generally adopted and should be preferred.

† For instance, in "The Names of the Gods in the Kiche Myths," pp. 21, 22, in *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 1881; *Annals of the Cakchiquels*, Introduction, p. 46; *Essays of an Americanist*, p. 170, etc.

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and there appealed to the streams, rocks and trees around him, and weeping, implored for himself the favors they had conferred on his ancestors. He then sacrificed a dog or a fowl, and drew blood from his tongue, or his ears, or other parts of his body, and turned to sleep. Either in his dreams or half awake, he would see some one of those animals or birds above mentioned, who would say to him, 'On such a day go hunting and the first animal or bird you see will be my form, and I shall remain your companion and *Nagual* for all time.' Thus their friendship became so close that when one died so did the other; and without such a *Nagual* the natives believe no one can become rich or powerful."*

This province of Cerquin appears to have been peopled by a tribe which belonged to the great Mayan stock, akin to those which occupied most of the area of what is now Yucatan, Tabasco, Chiapas and Guatemala.† I shall say something later about the legendary enchantress whom their traditions recalled as the teacher of their ancestors and the founder of their nation. What I would now call attention to is the fact that in none of the dialects of the specifically Mexican or Aztecan stock of languages do we find the word *nagual* in the sense in which it is employed in the above extract, and this is strong evidence that the origin of Nagualism is not to be sought in that stock.

**3.** We do find, however, in the Nahuatl language, which is the proper name of the Aztecan, a number of derivatives from the same root, *na*, among them this very word, *Nahuatl*, all of them containing the idea "to know," or "knowledge." The early missionaries to New Spain often speak of the *naualli* (plural, *nanahualtin*), masters of mystic knowledge, dealers in the black art, wizards or sorcerers. They were not always evil-minded persons, though they seem to have been generally feared. The earliest source of information about them is Father Sahagun, who, in his invaluable History, has the following paragraph:

"The *naualli*, or magician, is he who frightens men and sucks the blood of children during the night. He is well skilled in the practice of this trade, he knows all the arts of sorcery (*nauallotl*) and employs them with cunning and ability; but for the benefit of men only, not for their

* *Historia de las Indias Occidentales*, Dec. iv, Lib. viii, cap. 4.

† More especially it is the territory of the Chorti dialect, spoken to this day in the vicinity of the famous ancient city of Copan, Honduras. Cerquin lies in the mountains nearly due east of this celebrated site. On the Chorti, see Stoll, *Zur Ethnographie der Republik Guatemala*, pp. 106–9.

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injury. Those who have recourse to such arts for evil intents injure the bodies of their victims, cause them to lose their reason and smother them. These are wicked men and necromancers."*

It is evident on examining the later works of the Roman clergy in Mexico that the Church did not look with any such lenient eye on the possibly harmless, or even beneficial, exercise of these magical devices. We find a further explanation of what they were, preserved in a work of instruction to confessors, published by Father Juan Bautista, at Mexico, in the year 1600.

"There are magicians who call themselves *teciuhtlazque*,† and also by the term *nanahualtin*, who conjure the clouds when there is danger of hail, so that the crops may not be injured. They can also make a stick look like a serpent, a mat like a centipede, a piece of stone like a scorpion, and similar deceptions. Others of these *nanahualtin* will transform themselves to all appearances (segun la aparencia), into a tiger, a dog or a weasel. Others again will take the form of an owl, a cock, or a weasel ; and when one is preparing to seize them, they will appear now as a cock, now as an owl, and again as a weasel. These call themselves *nanahualtin*."‡

There is an evident attempt in this somewhat confused statement to distinguish between an actual transformation, and one which only appears such to the observer.

In another work of similar character, published at Mexico a few years later, the "Road to Heaven," of Father Nicolas de Leon, we find a series of questions which a confessor should put to any of his flock suspected of these necromantic practices. They reveal to us quite clearly what these occult practitioners were believed to do. The passage reads as follows, the questions being put in the mouth of the priest:

"Art thou a soothsayer? Dost thou foretell events by reading signs, or by interpreting dreams, or by water, making circles and figures on its surface? Dost thou sweep and ornament with flower garlands the places where idols are preserved? Dost thou know certain words with which to conjure for success in hunting, or to bring rain?

"Dost thou suck the blood of others, or dost thou wander about at night, calling upon the Demon to help thee? Hast thou drunk *peyotl*, or hast thou given it to others to drink, in order to find out secrets, or to discover where stolen or lost articles were? Dost thou know how to speak to vipers in such words that they obey thee?" §

* Bernardino de Sahagun, *Historia de la Nueva España*, Lib. x, cap. 9.

† Derived from *teciuhtlaza*, to conjure against hail, itself from *teciuh*, hail. Alonso de Molina, *Vocabulario Mexicano*, sub voce.

‡ Bautista, *Advertencias para los Confesores*, fol. 112 (Mexico, 1600).

§ Nicolas de Leon, *Camino del Cielo*, fol. 111 (Mexico, 1611).

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4. This interesting passage lets in considerable light on the claims and practices of the nagualists. Not the least important item is that of their use of the intoxicant, *peyotl*, a decoction of which it appears played a prominent part in their ceremonies. This is the native Nahuatl name of a certain plant, having a white, tuberous root, which is the part employed. It is mentioned as "pellote" or "peyote" in the *Farmacopea Mexicana* as a popular remedy, but its botanical name is not added. According to Paso y Troncoso, it is one of the Compositæ, a species of the genus *Cacalia*.* It is referred to in several passages by Father Sahagun, who says that it grows in southern Mexico, and that the Aztecs derived their knowledge of it from the older "Chichimecs." It was used as an intoxicant.

"Those who eat or drink of this *peyotl* see visions, which are sometimes frightful and sometimes ludicrous. The intoxication it causes lasts several days. The Chichimecs believed that it gave them courage in time of danger and diminished the pangs of hunger and thirst."†

Its use was continued until a late date, and very probably has not yet died out. Its composition and method of preparation are given in a list of beverages prohibited by the Spanish authorities in the year 1784, as follows:

"*Peyote:* Made from a species of vinagrilla, about the size of a billiard ball, which grows in dry and sterile soil. The natives chew it, and throw it into a wooden mortar, where it is left to ferment, some leaves of tobacco being added to give it pungency. They consume it in this form, sometimes with slices of *peyote* itself, in their most solemn festivities, although it dulls the intellect and induces gloomy and hurtful visions (sombras muy funestas)."‡

The *peyotl* was not the only herb prized as a means of casting the soul into the condition of hypostatic union with divinity. We have abundant evidence that long after the conquest the seeds of the plant called in Nahuatl the *ololiuhqui* were in high

* Paso y Troncoso, in *Anales del Museo Naciondl de Mexico*, Tom. iii, p. 180.

† Sahagun, *Historia de Nueva España*, Lib. x, cap. 29, and Lib. xi, cap. 7. Hernandez has the following on the mysterious properties of this plant: "Illud ferunt de hac radice mirabile (si modo fides sit vulgatissimæ inter eos rei habendæ), devorantes illam quodlibet præsagire prædicereque; velut an sequenti die hostes sint impetum in eos facturi? Anne illos felicia maneant tempora? Quis supellectilem, aut aliud quidpiam furto subripruerit? Et ad hunc modum alia, quibus Chichimecæ hujusmodi medicamine cognoscendis." Franciscus Hernandus, *Historia Plantarum Novæ Hispaniæ*, Tom. iii, p. 71 (Ed., Madrid, 1790).

‡ *Diccionario Universal*, Appendice, Tom. i, p. 360 (Mexico, 1856).

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esteem for this purpose. In the Confessionary of Father Bartholomé de Alva the priest is supposed to inquire and learn as follows:

"*Question.* Hast thou loved God above all things? Hast thou loved any created thing, adoring it, looking upon it as God, and worshiping it?

"*Answer.* I have loved God with all my heart; but sometimes I have believed in dreams, and also I have believed in the sacred herbs, the *peyotl*, and the *ololiuhqui;* and in other such things (*onicneltocac in temictli, in xiuhtzintli, in peyotl, in ololiuhqui, yhuan in occequitlamantli*)."*

The seeds of the *ololiuhqui* appear to have been employed externally. They were the efficient element in the mysterious unguent known as "the divine remedy" (*teopatli*), about which we find some information in the works of Father Augustin de Vetancurt, who lived in Mexico in the middle of the seventeenth century. He writes:

"The pagan priests made use of an ointment composed of insects, such as spiders, scorpions, centipedes and the like, which the neophytes in the temples prepared. They burned these insects in a basin, collected the ashes, and rubbed it up with green tobacco leaves, living worms and insects, and the powdered seeds of a plant called *ololiuhqui*, which has the power of inducing visions, and the effect of which is to destroy the reasoning powers. Under the influence of this ointment, they conversed with the Devil, and he with them, practicing his deceptions upon them. They also believed that it protected them, so they had no fear of going into the woods at night.

"This was also employed by them as a remedy in various diseases, and the soothing influence of the tobacco and the *ololiuhqui* was attributed by them to divine agency. There are some in our own day who make use of this ointment for sorcery, shutting themselves up, and losing their reason under its influence; especially some old men and old women, who are prepared to fall an easy prey to the Devil."†

The botanist Hernandez observes that another name for this plant was *coaxihuitl*, "serpent plant," and adds that its seeds contain a narcotic poison, and that it is allied to the genus *Solanum*, of which the deadly night-shade is a familiar species. He speaks of its use in the sacred rites in these words:

"Indorum sacrifici, cum videri volebant versari cum superis, ac responsa accipere ab eis, ea vescebantur planta, ut desiperent, milleque phantasmata et demonum observatium effigies circumspectarent."‡

* *Confessionario Mayor y Menor en lengua Mexicana*, fol. 8, verso (Mexico, 1634).
† Vetancurt, *Teatro Mexicano*, Trat. iii, cap. 9.
‡ Hernandez, *Historia Plantarum Novæ Hispaniæ*, Tom. iii, p. 32.

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Of the two plants mentioned, the *ololiuhqui* and the *peyotl*, the former was considered the more potent in spiritual virtues. "They hold it in as much veneration as if it were God," says a theologian of the seventeenth century.* One who partook of these herbs was called *payni* (from the verb *pày*, to take medicine); and more especially *tlachixqui*, a Seer, referring to the mystic "second sight," hence a diviner or prophet (from the verb *tlachia*, to see).

Tobacco also held a prominent, though less important, place in these rites. It was employed in two forms, the one the dried leaf, *picietl*, which for sacred uses must be broken and rubbed up either seven or nine times; and the green leaf mixed with lime, hence called *tenextlecietl* (from *tenextli*, lime).

Allied in effect to these is an intoxicant in use in southern Mexico and Yucatan, prepared from the bark of a tree called by the Mayas *baal-che*. The whites speak of the drink as *pitarilla*. It is quite popular among the natives, and they still attribute to it a sacred character, calling it *yax ha*, the first water, the primal fluid. They say that it was the first liquid created by God, and when He returned to His heavenly home He left this beverage and its production in charge of the gods of the rains, the four Pah-Ahtuns.†

**5.** Intoxication of some kind was an essential part of many of these secret rites. It was regarded as a method of throwing the individual out of himself and into relation with the supernal powers. What the old historian, Father Joseph de Acosta, tells us about the clairvoyants and telepaths of the aborigines might well stand for a description of their modern representatives:

"Some of these sorcerers take any shape they choose, and fly through the air with wonderful rapidity and for long distances. They will tell what is taking place in remote localities long before the news could possibly arrive. The Spaniards have known them to report mutinies, battles, revolts and deaths, occurring two hundred or three hundred leagues distant, on the very day they took place, or the day after.

* Dr. Jacinto de la Serna, *Manual de Min stros de Indios para el Conocimiento de sus Idolatrias y Extirpacion de Ellas*, p. 163. This interesting work was composed about the middle of the seventeenth century by a Rector of the University of Mexico, but was first printed at Madrid, in 1892, from the MS. furnished by Dr. N. Leon, under the editorship of the Marquis de la Fuensanta del Valle.

† MSS. of the Licentiate Zetina, and *Informe* of Father Baeza in *Registro Yucateco*, Tom. i.

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"To practice this art the sorcerers, usually old women, shut themselves in a house, and intoxicate themselves to the degree of losing their reason. The next day they are ready to reply to questions."*

Plants possessing similar powers to excite vivid visions and distort the imagination, and, therefore, employed in the magical rites, were the *thiuimeezque*, in Michoacan, and the *chacuaco*, in lower California.†

**6.** In spite of all effort, the various classes of wonder-workers continued to thrive in Mexico. We find in a book of sermons published by the Jesuit Father, Ignacio de Paredes, in the Nahuatl language, in 1757, that he strenuously warns his hearers against invoking, consulting, or calling upon "the devilish spell-binders, the nagualists, and those who conjure with smoke."‡

They have not yet lost their power; we have evidence enough that many children of a larger growth in that land still listen with respect to the recitals of the mysterious faculties attributed to the *nanahualtin*. An observant German traveler, Carlos von Gagern, informs us that they are widely believed to be able to cause sicknesses and other ills, which must be counteracted by appropriate exorcisms, among which the reading aloud certain passages of the Bible is deemed to be one of the most potent.§

The learned historian, Orozco y Berra, speaks of the powers attributed at the present day to the *nahual* in Mexico among the lower classes, in these words:

"The *nahual* is generally an old Indian with red eyes, who knows how to turn himself into a dog, woolly, black and ugly. The female witch can convert herself into a ball of fire; she has the power of flight, and at night will enter the windows and suck the blood of little children. These sorcerers will make little images of rags or of clay, then stick into them the thorn of the maguey and place them in some secret place; you can

* Acosta, *De la Historia Moral de Indias*, Lib. v, cap. 26.

† Of the *thiuimeezque* Hernandez writes: "Aiunt radicis cortice unius unciæ pondere tuso, atque devorato, multa ante oculos observare phantasmata, multiplices imagines ac monstrificas rerum figuras, detegique furem, si quidpiam rei familiaris subreptum sit." *Hist. Plant. Nov. Hispan.*, Tom. iii, p. 272. The *chacuaco* and its effects are described by Father Venegas in his *History of California*, etc.

‡ "In Mictlan Tetlachihuique, in Nanahualtin, in Tlahuipuchtin." Paredes, *Promptuario Manual Mexicano*, p. 128 (Mexico, 1757). The *tlahuipuchtin*, "those who work with smoke," were probably diviners who foretold the future from the forms taken by smoke in rising in the air. This class of augurs were also found in Peru, where they were called *Uirapircos* (Balboa, *Hist. du Perou*, p. 28–30).

§ Von Gagern, *Charakteristik der Indianischer Bevölkerung Mexikos*, s. 125.

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be sure that the person against whom the conjuration is practiced will feel pain in the part where the thorn is inserted. There still exist among them the medicine-men, who treat the sick by means of strange contortions, call upon the spirits, pronounce magical incantations, blow upon the part where the pain is, and draw forth from the patient thorns, worms, or pieces of stone. They know how to prepare drinks which will bring on sickness, and if the patients are cured by others the convalescents are particular to throw something of their own away, as a lock of hair, or a part of their clothing. Those who possess the evil eye can, by merely looking at children, deprive them of beauty and health, and even cause their death."*

7. As I have said, nowhere in the records of purely Mexican, that is, Aztecan, Nagualism do we find the word *nagual* employed in the sense given in the passage quoted from Herrera, that is as a personal guardian spirit or tutelary genius. These tribes had, indeed, a belief in some such protecting power, and held that it was connected with the day on which each person is born. They called it the *tonalli* of a person, a word translated to mean that which is peculiar to him, which makes his individuality, his self. The radical from which it is derived is *tona*, to warm, or to be warm, from which are also derived *tonatiuh*, the sun. *Tonalli*, which in composition loses its last syllable, is likewise the word for heat, summer, soul, spirit and day, and also for the share or portion which belongs to one. Thus, *to-tonal* is spirit or soul in general; *no-tonal*, my spirit; *no-tonal in ipan no-tlacat*, "the sign under which I was born," *i. e.*, the astrological day-sign. From this came the verb *tonalpoa*, to count or estimate the signs, that is, to cast the horoscope of a person; and *tonalpouhque*, the diviners whose business it was to practice this art.†

These *tonalpouhque* are referred to at length by Father Sahagun.‡ He distinguishes them from the *naualli*, though it is clear that they corresponded in functions to the nagualistic priests of the southern tribes. From the number and name of the day of

* *Historia Antigua de Mexico*, Tom. ii, p. 25. Francisco Pimentel, in his thoughtful work, *Memoria sobre las Causas que han originado la Situacion Actual de la Raza Indigena de Mexico* (Mexico, 1864), recognizes how almost impossible it is to extirpate their faith in this nagualism. "Conservan los agueros y supersticiones de la antigüedad, siendo cosa de fe para ellos, los *nahuales*," etc., p. 200, and comp. p. 145.

† On these terms consult the extensive *Dictionnaire de la Langue Nahuatl*, by Rémi Simeon, published at Paris, 1887. It is not impossible that *tona* is itself a compound root, including the monosyllabic radical *na*, which is at the basis of *nagual*.

‡ Sahagun, *Historia de Nueva España*, Lib. iv, *passim*, and Lib. x, cap. 9.

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birth they forecast the destiny of the child, and stated the power or spiritual influence which should govern its career.

The *tonal* was by no means an indefeasible possession. It was a sort of independent *mascotte*. So long as it remained with a person he enjoyed health and prosperity; but it could depart, go astray, become lost; and then sickness and misfortune arrived. This is signified in the Nahuatl language by the verbs *tonalcaualtia*, to check, stop or suspend the *tonal*, hence, to shock or frighten one; and *tonalitlacoa*, to hurt or injure the *tonal*, hence, to cast a spell on one, to bewitch him.

This explains the real purpose of the conjuring and incantations which were carried on by the native doctor when visiting the sick. It was to recall the *tonal*, to force or persuade it to return; and, therefore, the ceremony bore the name "the restitution of the *tonal*," and was more than any other deeply imbued with the superstitions of Nagualism. The chief officiant was called the *tetonaltiani*, "he who concerns himself with the tonal." On a later page I shall give the formula recited on such an occasion.

**8.** There is some vague mention in the Aztec records of a semi-priestly order, who bore the name *naualteteuctin*, which may be translated "master magicians." They were also known as *teotlauice*, "sacred companions in arms." As was the case with most classes of the *teteuctin*, or nobles, entrance to the order was by a severe and prolonged ceremony of initiation, the object of which was not merely to test the endurance of pain and the powers of self-denial, but especially to throw the mind into that subjective state in which it is brought into contact with the divine, in which it can "see visions and dream dreams." The order claimed as its patron and founder Quetzalcoatl, the "feathered serpent," who, it will be seen on another page, was also the patron of the later nagualists.*

The word *naualli* also occurs among the ancient Nahuas in composition as a part of proper names; always with the signification of "magician," as in that of Naualcuauhtla, a chief of the Chalcos, meaning "wizard-stick," referring probably to the

* See Ch. de Labarthe, *Révue Américaine*, Serie ii, Tom. ii, pp. 222–225. His translation of *naualleteuctin* by "Seigneurs du gènie" must be rejected, as there is absolutely no authority for assigning this meaning to *naualli*.

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rod or wand employed by the magi in conjuration.* So also *Naualac*, the "wizard water," an artificial lake not far from the city of Mexico, surrounded by ruined temples, described by M. Charnay.†

**9.** The belief in a personal guardian spirit was one of the fundamental doctrines of Nagualism; but this belief by no means connotes the full import of the term (as Mr. H. H. Bancroft has erroneously stated). The calendar system of Mexico and Central America, which I have shown to be substantially the same throughout many diverse linguistic stocks,‡ had as one of its main objects, astrological divination. By consulting it the appropriate nagual was discovered and assigned, and this was certainly a prominent feature in the native cult and has never been abandoned.

In Mexico to-day, in addition to his special personal guardian, the native will often choose another for a limited time or for a particular purpose, and this is quite consistent with the form of Christianity he has been taught. For instance, as we are informed by an observant traveler, at New Year or at corn-planting the head of a family will go to the parish church and among the various saints there displayed will select one as his guardian for the year. He will address to him his prayers for rain and sunshine, for an abundant harvest, health and prosperity, and will not neglect to back these supplications by liberal gifts. If times are good and harvests ample the Santo is rewarded with still more gifts, and his aid is sought for another term; but if luck has been bad the Indian repairs to the church at the end of the year, bestows on his holy patron a sound cursing, calls him all the bad names he can think of, and has nothing more to do with him.§

**10.** A Mexican writer, Andres Iglesias, who enjoyed more than common opportunities to study these practices as they exist in the present generation, describes them as he saw them in the village of Soteapan, a remote hamlet in the State of Vera Cruz, the population of which speak the Mixe language. This

* *Anales de Cuauhtitlan*, p. 31. The translator renders it "palo brujo."

† *Les Anciennes Villes du Nouveau Monde*, pp. 146–148, figured on p. 150. On its significance compare Hamy, *Decades Americanæ*, pp. 74–81.

‡ *The Native Calendar of Central America and Mexico* (Philadelphia, 1893).

§ Eduard Mühlenpfordt, *Mexico*, Bd. I, s. 255.

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is not related to the Nahuatl tongue, but the terms of their magical rites are drawn from Nahuatl words, showing their origin. Every person at birth has assigned to him both a good and a bad genius, the former aiming at his welfare, the latter at his injury. The good genius is known by the Nahuatl term *tonale*, and it is represented in the first bird or animal of any kind which is seen in or near the house immediately after the birth of the infant.

The most powerful person in the village is the high priest of the native cult. One who died about 1850 was called "the Thunderbolt," and whenever he walked abroad he was preceded by a group of chosen disciples, called by the Nahuatl name *tlatoques*, speakers or attorneys.* His successor, known as "the Greater Thunder," did not maintain this state, but nevertheless claimed to be able to control the seasons and to send or to mitigate destructive storms—claims which, sad to say, brought him to the stocks, but did not interfere with the regular payment of tribute to him by the villagers. He was also a medicine man and master of ceremonies in certain "scandalous orgies, where immodesty shows herself without a veil."

**11.** Turning to the neighboring province of Oaxaca and its inhabitants, we are instructed on the astrological use of the calendar of the Zapotecs by Father Juan de Cordova, whose *Arte* of their language was published at Mexico in 1578. From what he says its principal, if not its only purpose, was astrological. Each day had its number and was called after some animal, as eagle, snake, deer, rabbit, etc. Every child, male or female, received the name of the day, and also its number, as a surname; its personal name being taken from a fixed series, which differed in the masculine and feminine gender, and which seems to have been derived from the names of the fingers.

From this it appears that among the Zapotecs the personal spirit or *nagual* was fixed by the date of the birth, and not by some

* The word is derived from *tlatoa*, to speak for another, and its usual translation was "chief," as the head man spoke for, and in the name of the gens or tribe.

† The interesting account by Iglesias is printed in the Appendix to the *Diccionario Universal de Geographia y Historia* (Mexico, 1856). Other writers testify to the tenacity with which the Mixes cling to their ancient beliefs. Señor Moro says they continue to be "notorious idolaters," and their actual religion to be "an absurd jumble of their old superstitions with Christian doctrines" (in Orozco y Berra, *Geografia de las Lenguas de exico*, p. 176).

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later ceremony, although the latter has been asserted by some writers; who, however, seem to have applied without certain knowledge the rites of the Nahuas and other surrounding tribes to the Zapotecs.*

Next in importance to the assigning of names, according to Father Cordova, was the employment of the calendar in deciding the propriety of marriages. As the recognized object of marriage was to have sons, the couple appealed to the professional augur to decide this question before the marriage was fixed. He selected as many beans as was the sum of the numbers of the two proponents' names, and, counting them by twos, if one remained over, it meant a son; then counting by threes any remainder also meant sons; by fours the remainder meant either sons or daughters; and by five and six the same; and if there was no remainder by any of these five divisors the marriage would result in no sons and was prohibited.

It is obvious that this method of fortune-telling was most auspicious for the lovers; for I doubt if there is any combination of two numbers below fourteen which is divisible by two, three, four, five and six without remainder in any one instance.†

The Zapotecs were one of those nations who voluntarily submitted themselves to the Spaniards, not out of love for the Europeans, but through hatred of the Aztecs, who had conquered them in the preceding century. Their king, Coyopy, and his subjects accepted Christianity. and were generally baptized; but it was the merest formality, and years afterwards Coyopy was detected secretly conducting the heathen ritual of his ancestors with all due pomp. He was arrested, sent to the city of Mexico, deprived of his power and wealth, and soon died; it is charitably supposed, from natural causes. There is no question but that he left successors to the office of pontifex maximus, and that they continued the native religious ceremonies.

**12.** The sparse notices we have of the astrology of the Mixtecs, neighbors and some think relatives of the Zapotecs, reveal

* For instance, J. B. Carriedo, in his *Estudios Historicos del Estado Oaxaqueño* (Oaxaca, 1849), p. 15, says the *nahualt* was a ceremony performed by the native priest, in which the infant was bled from a vein behind the ear, assigned a name, that of a certain day, and a guardian angel or *tona*. These words are pure Nahuatl, and Carriedo, who does not give his authority, probably had none which referred these rites to the Zapotecs.

† Juan de Cordova, *Arte en Lengua Zapoteca*, pp. 16, 202, 203, 213, 216.

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closely similar rites. The name of their king, who opposed Montezuma the First some sixty years before the arrival of Cortez, proves that they made use of the same or a similar calendar in bestowing personal appellations. It is given as *Tres Micos*, Three Monkeys.

Unfortunately, so far as I know, there has not been published, and perhaps there does not exist, an authentic copy of the Mixtec calendar. It was nevertheless reduced to writing in the native tongue after the conquest, and a copy of it was seen by the historian Burgoa in the Mixtec town of Yanhuitlan.* Each day was named from a tree, a plant or an animal, and from them the individual received his names, as Four Lions, Five Roses, etc. (examples given by Herrera). This latter writer adds that the name was assigned by the priests when the child was seven years old (as among the Tzentals), part of the rite being to conduct it to the temple and bore its ears. He refers also to their auguries relating to marriage.† These appear to have been different from among the Zapotecs. It was necessary that the youth should have a name bearing a higher number than that of the maiden, and also "that they should be related;" probably this applied only to certain formal marriages of the rulers which were obliged to be within the same *gens*.

**13.** I have referred in some detail to the rites and superstitions connected with the Calendar because they are all essential parts of Nagualism, carried on far into Christian times by the priests of this secret cult, as was fully recognized by the Catholic clergy. Wherever this calendar was in use, the Freemasonry of Nagualism extended, and its ritual had constant reference to it. Our fullest information about it does not come from central Mexico, but further south, in the region occupied by the various branches of the Mayan stock, by the ancestors of some one of which, perhaps, this singular calendar, and the symbolism connected with it, were invented.

One of the most important older authorities on this subject is Francisco Nuñez de la Vega, a learned Dominican, who was appointed Bishop of Chiapas and Soconusco in 1687, and who published at Rome, in 1702, a stately folio entitled "*Constitu-*

* Quoted in Carriedo, ubi suprá, p. 17.
† *Hist. de las Indias Oc.*, Dec. iii, Lib. iii, cap. 12.

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*ciones Diœcesanas del Obispado de Chiappa*," comprising discussions of the articles of religion and a series of pastoral letters. The subject of Nagualism is referred to in many passages, and the ninth Pastoral Letter is devoted to it. As this book is one of extreme rarity, I shall make rather lengthy extracts from it, taking the liberty of condensing the scholastic prolixity of the author, and omitting his professional admonitions to the wicked.

He begins his references to it in several passages of his Introduction or *Preambulo*, in which he makes some interesting statements as to the use to which the natives put their newly-acquired knowledge of writing, while at the same time they had evidently not forgotten the ancient method of recording ideas invented by their ancestors.

The Bishop writes:

"The Indians of New Spain retain all the errors of their time of heathenism preserved in certain writings in their own languages, explaining by abbreviated characters and by figures painted in a secret cypher * the places, provinces and names of their early rulers, the animals, stars and elements which they worshiped, the ceremonies and sacrifices which they observed, and the years, months and days by which they predicted the fortunes of children at birth, and assign them that which they call the Naguals. These writings are known as Repertories or Calendars, and they are also used to discover articles lost or stolen, and to effect cures of diseases. Some have a wheel painted in them, like that of Pythagoras, described by the Venerable Bede; others portray a lake surrounded by the Naguals in the form of various animals. Some of the Nagualist Masters claim as their patron and ruler Cuchulchan, and they possessed a certain formula of prayer to him, written in the Popoluca tongue (which was called Baha in their time of heathenism), and which has been translated into Mexican.†

"Those who are selected to become the masters of these arts are taught from early childhood how to draw and paint these characters, and are obliged to learn by heart the formulas, and the names of the ancient Nagualists, and whatever else is included in these written documents, many of which we have held in our hands, and have heard them explained by such masters whom we had imprisoned for their guilt, and who had afterwards become converted and acknowledged their sins."‡

* So I understand the phrase, "figuras pintadas con zifras enigmaticas."

† *Popoluca* was a term applied to various languages. I suspect the one here referred to was the Mixe. See an article by me, entitled "Chontales and Popolucas; a Study in Mexican Ethnography," in the *Compte Rendu* of the Eighth Session of the Congress of Americanists, p. 556, *seq*.

‡ *Constit. Diocesan*, p. 19.

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The Bishop made up his mind that extreme measures should be taken to eradicate these survivals of the ancient paganism in his diocese, and he therefore promulgated the following order in the year 1692:

"And because in the provinces of our diocese those Indians who are Nagualists adore their *naguals*, and look upon them as gods, and by their aid believe that they can foretell the future, discover hidden treasures, and fulfill their dishonest desires: we, therefore, prescribe and command that in every town an ecclesiastical prison shall be constructed at the expense of the church, and that it be provided with fetters and stocks (con grillos y cepos), and we confer authority on every priest and curate of a parish to imprison in these gaols whoever is guilty of disrespect toward our Holy Faith, and we enjoin them to treat with especial severity those who teach the doctrines of Nagualism (y con rigor mayor á los dogmatizantes Nagualistas)." *

In spite of these injunctions it is evident that he failed to destroy the seeds of what he esteemed this dangerous heresy in the parishes of his diocese; for his ninth Pastoral Letter, in which he exposes at length the character of Nagualism, is dated from the metropolitan city of Ciudad Real, on May 24, 1698. As much of it is germane to my theme, I translate as follows:

"There are certain bad Christians of both sexes who do not hesitate to follow the school of the Devil, and to occupy themselves with evil arts, divinations, sorceries, conjuring, enchantments, fortune-telling, and other means to forecast the future.

"These are those who in all the provinces of New Spain are known by the name of *Nagualists*. They pretend that the birth of men is regulated by the course and movements of stars and planets, and by observing the time of day and the months in which a child is born, they prognosticate its condition and the events, prosperous or otherwise, of its life; and the worst is that these perverse men have written down their signs and rules, and thus deceive the erring and ignorant.

"These Nagualists practice their arts by means of Repertories and superstitious Calendars, where are represented under their proper names all the Naguals of stars, elements, birds, fishes, brute beasts and dumb animals; with a vain note of days and months, so that they can announce which corresponds to the day of birth of the infant. This is preceded by some diabolical ceremonies, after which they designate the field or other spot, where, after seven years shall have elapsed, the Nagual will appear to ratify the bargain. As the time approaches, they instruct the child to

* *Constitut. Diocesan*, Titulo vii, pp. 47, 48.

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deny God and His Blessed Mother, and warn him to have no fear, and not to make the sign of the cross. He is told to embrace his Nagual tenderly, which, by some diabolical art, presents itself in an affectionate manner even though it be a ferocious beast, like a lion or a tiger. Thus, with infernal cunning they persuade him that this Nagual is an angel of God, who will look after him and protect him in his after life.

"To such diabolical masters the intelligent Indians apply, to learn from these superstitious Calendars, dictated by the Devil, their own fortunes, and the Naguals which will be assigned to their children, even before they are baptized. In most of the Calendars, the seventh sign is the figure of a man and a snake, which they call Cuchulchan. The masters have explained it as a snake with feathers which moves in the water. This sign corresponds with Mexzichuaut, which means Cloudy Serpent, or, of the clouds.* The people also consult them in order to work injury on their enemies, taking the lives of many through such devilish artifices, and committing unspeakable atrocities.

"Worse even than these are those who wander about as physicians or healers; who are none such, but magicians, enchanters, and sorcerers, who, while pretending to cure, kill whom they will. They apply their medicines by blowing on the patient, and by the use of infernal words; learned by heart by those who cannot read or write; and received in writing from their masters by those acquainted with letters. The Master never imparts this instruction to a single disciple, but always to three at a time, so that in the practice of the art it may be difficult to decide which one exerts the magical power. They blow on feathers, or sticks, or plants, and place them in the paths where they may be stepped on by those they wish to injure, thus causing chills, fevers, ugly pustules and other diseases; or they introduce into the body by such arts toads, frogs, snakes, centipedes, etc, causing great torments. And by these same breathings and magic words they can burn down houses, destroy the growing crops and induce sickness. No one of the three disciples is permitted to practice any of these arts without previously informing the other two, and also the Master, by whom the three have been taught.

"We have learned by the confession of certain guilty parties how the Master begins to instruct his disciple. First he tells him to abjure God, the saints and the Virgin, not to invoke their names, and to have no fear of them. He then conducts him to the wood, glen, cave or field where the pact with the Devil is concluded, which they call 'the agreement' or 'the word given' (in Tzental *quiz*). In some provinces the disciple is laid on an ant-hill, and the Master standing above him calls forth a snake, colored with black, white and red, which is known as 'the ant-mother' (in Tzental *zmezquiz*).† This comes accompanied by the ants

* Rather with the Quetzalcoatl of the Nahuas, and the Gucumatz of the Quiches, both of which names mean "Feathered Serpent." Mixcohuatl, the Cloud Serpent, in Mexican mythology, referred to the Thunder-storm.

† In his Tzental Vocabulary, Father Lara does not give this exact form; but in the neighboring dialect of the Cakchiquel Father Ximenes has *quikeho*, to agree together, to enter into an arrangement; the prefix *zme* is the Tzental word for "mother."

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and other small snakes of the same kind, which enter at the joints of the fingers, beginning with the left hand, and coming out at the joints of the right hand, and also by the ears and the nose; while the great snake enters the body with a leap and emerges at its posterior vent. Afterwards the disciple meets a dragon vomiting fire, which swallows him entire and ejects him posteriorly. Then the Master declares he may be admitted, and asks him to select the herbs with which he will conjure; the disciple names them, the Master gathers them and delivers them to him, and then teaches him the sacred words.

"These words and ceremonies are substantially the same in all the provinces. The healer enters the house of the invalid, asks about the sickness, lays his hand on the suffering part, and then leaves, promising to return on the day following. At the next visit he brings with him some herbs which he chews or mashes with a little water and applies to the part. Then he repeats the *Puter Noster*, the *Ave*, the *Credo* and the *Salve*. and blows upon the seat of disease, afterwards pronouncing the magical words taught him by his master. He continues blowing in this manner, inhaling and exhaling, repeating under his breath these magical expressions, which are powerful to kill or to cure as he chooses, through the compact he has made with the Devil. Finally, so as to deceive the bystanders, he ends with saying in a loud voice: 'God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. Amen.'

"This physician or healer is called in the towns of some of the provinces *poxta vanegs*, and the medicine *gspoxil;* and everything relating to healing among the Indians to which they apply these terms means also to practice sorcery; and all words derived from *pox* allude to the Nagual; for this in some provinces is called *poxlon*, and in others *patzlan*, and in many *tzihuizin*, which is something very much feared by the Indians. We have ascertained by the confessions of many who have been reconciled that the Devil at times appears to them in the shape of a ball or globe of fire in the air, with a tail like a comet.*

"According to the most ancient traditions of these Indians this idol, *poxlon*, was one of the most important and venerated they had in the old

* Father Lara, in his *Vocabulario Tzendal MS.* (in my possession), gives for medical (medico), *ghpoxil;* for medicine (medicinal cosa), *pox, xpoxtacoghbil;* for physician (medico), *ghpoxta vinic* (the form *vanegh*, person, is also correct). The Tzendal *pox* (pronounced *pōsh*) is another form of the Quiche-Cakchiquel *pūz*, a word which Father Ximenes, in his *Vocabulario Cakchiquel* MS. (in my possession), gives in the compound *puz-naual*, with the meaning, enchanter, wizard. Both these, I take it, are derived from the Maya *puz*, which means to blow the dust, etc., off of something (soplar el polvo de la ropa ó otra cosa. *Dicc. de la Lengua Maya del Convento de Motul*, MS. The dictionary edited by Pio Perez does not give this meaning). The act of blowing was the essential feature in the treatment of these medicine men. It symbolized the transfer and exercise of spiritual power. When Votan built his underground shrine he did it *à soplos*, by blowing (Nuñez de la Vega, *Constitut. Diocesan*, p. 10). The natives did not regard the comet's tail as behind it but in front of it, blown from its mouth. The Nahuatl word in the text, *tzihuizin*, is the Pipil form of *xihuitzin*, the reverential of *xihuitl*, which means a leaf, a season, a year, or a comet. Apparently it refers to the Nahuatl divinity *Xiuhtécutli*, described by Sahagun, *Historia de Nueva España*, Lib. i, cap. 13, as god of fire, etc.

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times, and the Tzentals revered it so much that they preserved it innumerable years painted on a tablet in the above figure. Even after they were converted to the faith, they hung it behind a beam in the church of the town of Oxchuc, accompanied by an image of their god Hicalahau, having a ferocious black face with the members of a man,* along with five owls and vultures. By divine interposition, we discovered these on our second visit there in 1687, and had no little difficulty in getting them down, we reciting the creed, and the Indians constantly spitting as they executed our orders. These objects were publicly burned in the plaza.

"In other parts they reverence the bones of the earlier Nagualists, preserving them in caves, where they adorn them with flowers and burn copal before them. We have discovered some of these and burned them, hoping to root out and put a stop to such evil ceremonies of the infernal sect of the Nagualists.

"At present, all are not so subject to the promptings of the Devil as formerly, but there are still some so closely allied to him that they transform themselves into tigers, lions, bulls, flashes of light and globes of fire. We can say from the declaration and solemn confession of some penitents that it is proved that the Devil had carnal relations with them, both as incubus and succubus, approaching them in the form of their Nagual; and there was one woman who remained in the forest a week with the demon in the form of her Nagual, acting toward him as does an infatuated woman toward her lover (como pudiera con su proprio amigo una muger amancebada). As a punishment for such horrible crimes our Lord has permitted that they lose their life as soon as their Nagual is killed; and that they bear on their own bodies the wound or mark of the blow which killed it; as the curas of Chamula, Copainala and other places have assured us.

"The devilish seed of this Nagualism has rooted itself in the very flesh and blood of these Indians. It perseveres in their hearts through the instructions of the masters of the sect, and there is scarcely a town in these provinces in which it has not been introduced. It is a superstitious idolatry, full of monstrous incests, sodomies and detestable bestialities."

Such are the words of the Bishop of Chiapas. We learn from his thoroughly instructed and unimpeachable testimony that at the beginning of the eighteenth century Nagualism was a widespread and active institution among the Indians of southern Mexico; that it was taught and practiced by professors who were so much feared and respected that, as he tells us in another passage, they were called "masters of the towns;"† that they gave systematic instruction to disciples in classes of

* *Hicalahau*, for *ical ahau*, Black King, one of the Tzental divinities, who will be referred to on a later page.

† "Mæstros de los pueblos," *Constitut. Diocesan*, i, p. 106.

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three, all of whom were bound together by pledges of mutual information and assistance; that a fundamental principle of the organization and an indispensable step in the initiation into its mysteries was the abjuration of the Christian religion, and an undying hatred to its teachers and all others of the race of the white oppressors; and that when they made use of Christian phrases or ceremonies it was either in derision or out of hypocrisy, the better to conceal their real sentiments.

There are a number of other witnesses from the seventeenth century that may be summoned to strengthen this testimony, if it needs it.

**14.** In the *History of Guatemala*, written about 1690 by Francisco Antonio Fuentes y Guzman, the author gives some information about a sorcerer of this school, who was arrested in Totonicapan, and with whom the historian had something to do as *corregidor*.

The redoubtable magician was a little old man, *viejezuelo*, and when caught had in his possession a document giving the days of the year according to the European calendar, with the Nagual, which belonged to each one. That for January is alone given by our writer, but it is probable that the other months merely repeated the naguals corresponding to the numbers. It ran as follows:

*Nagual Calendar for January.*

1. Lion.
2. Snake.
3. Stone.
4. Alligator.
5. Ceiba tree.
6. The quetzal (a bird).
7. A stick.
8. Rabbit.
9. A rope.
10. Leaf.
11. Deer.
12. Guacamayo (parrot).
13. Flower.
14. Toad.
15. Caterpillar.
16. A chip.
17. Arrow.
18. Broom.
19. Jaguar.
20. Corn-husk.
21. A flute.
22. Green-stone.
23. Crow.
24. Fire.
25. A pheasant.
26. A reed.
27. Opossum.
28. Huracan (the thunder-storm).
29. The vulture.
30. Hawk.
31. Bat.

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When the sorcerer was examined as to the manner of assigning the proper nagual to a child he gave the following account:

Having been informed of its day of birth, he in due time called at the residence of the parents, and told the mother to bring the child into the field behind the house. Having there invoked the demon, the *nagual* of the child would appear under the form of the animal or object set opposite its birthday in the calendar, a serpent were it born on the 2d of January, a flower were it on the 13th, fire were it on the 24th, and so on. The sorcerer then addressed certain prayers to the *nagual* to protect the little one, and told the mother to take it daily to the same spot, where its *nagual* would appear to it, and would finally accompany it through all its life. Some, but not all, obtained the power of transforming themselves into the *nagual*, and the author declares that, though he could not cite such a case from his own experience, his father knew of several, and reliable priests, *religiosos de fé*, had told him enough examples to fill volumes.*

The tribes to which this author refers were the Cakchiquels and Quiches, who spoke practically the same tongue. An examination of some of the old dictionaries prepared by the early missionaries furnishes further and interesting information about this obscure subject.

In the Cakchiquel language of Guatemala, the word *naual* was applied both to the magician himself, to his necromantic art, and to the demonic agency which taught and protected him. This is shown by the following explanation, which I quote from Father Coto's *Vocabulario de la Lengua Cakchiquel*, 1651, a manuscript in the library of the American Philosophical Society:

"*Magic* or *Necromancy*: *puz* or *naual*; and they were accustomed to call their magicians or sorcerers by the same terms. It was a kind of magic which they invoked in order to transform themselves into eagles, lions, tigers, etc. Thus, they said, *ru puz, ru naual, pedro læ cot, balam*, 'Peter's power. his *naual*, is a lion, a tiger.' They also applied the words *puz* and *naual* to certain trees, rocks and other inanimate objects, whence the Devil used to speak to them, and likewise to the idols which they worshiped, as *gazlic che, gazlic abah, huyu, k'o ru naual*, 'The life of the tree, the life of the stone, of the hill, is its *naual*,' etc.; because they believed there was life in these objects. They used to have armies and

* *Historia de Guatemala, ò, Recordacion Florida*, Tom. ii, p. 44, *seq.*

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soldiery to guard their lands, and the captains, as well as many who were not captains, had their *nauales*. They called the captain *ru g' alache; rohobachi, ti ru gaah, ru pocob, ru gh' amay a ghay ti be chi naualil* [he works magic with his shield, his lance, and his arrows].

"To practice such magical arts: *tin naualih* ('I practice magic'), an active verb. They use it, for instance, when a man asks his wife for something to eat or drink, and she has nothing, owing to his negligence, she will say: 'Where do you suppose I can get what you want? Do you expect me to perform miracles—*xa pe ri tin naualih*—that they shall come to my hands?' So when one is asked to lend or give something which he has not, he will exclaim: *Tin naualih pe ri puvak*, etc. ('Can I perform miracles,' etc.)

"It also signifies to pretend something, concealing the truth, as *xa ru naualim ara neh chu g' ux ri tzih tan tu bijh pedro*, 'Peter is feigning this which he is saying.' They are also accustomed to apply this word to the power which the priests exert (in the sacraments, etc.)."

A long and foolish account of the witchcraft supposed to be practiced among the Pokonchis of Guatemala, also a tribe of Mayan stock, is given by the Englishman, Thomas Gage, who was cura of a parish among them about 1630, and afterwards returned to England and Protestantism. He described, at wearisome length, the supposed metamorphosis of two chiefs of neighboring tribes, the one into a lion, the other into a tiger, and the mortal combat in which they engaged, resulting in the death of one to whom Gage administered absolution. No doubt he had been worsted in a personal encounter with his old enemy, and, being a man of eighty years, had not the vigor to recover. The account is of interest only as proving that the same superstitions at that time prevailed among the Pokonchis as in other portions of Guatemala.*

**15.** A really mighty nagualist was not confined to a single transformation. He could take on many and varied figures. One such is described in the sacred books of the Quiches of Guatemala, that document known by the name of the Popol Vuh, or National Book. The passage is in reference to one of their great kings and powerful magicians, Gucumatz by name. It says:

"Truly he was a wonderful king. Every seven days he ascended to the sky, and every seven days he followed the path to the abode of the

* Gage, *A New Survey of the West Indies*, p. 338, *seq.* (4th Ed.).

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dead; every seven days he put on the nature of a serpent, and then he became truly a serpent; every seven days he assumed the nature of an eagle, and then he became truly an eagle; then of a tiger and he became truly a tiger; then of coagulated blood, and he was nothing else than coagulated blood."*

It may be said that such passages refer metaphorically to the versatility of his character, but even if this is so, the metaphors are drawn from the universal belief in Nagualism which then prevailed, and they do not express it too strongly.

**16.** Among the Maya tribes of Yucatan and Guatemala we have testimony to the continuance to this day of these beliefs. Father Bartolomé de Baeza, cura of Yaxcaba in the first half of this century, reports that an old man, in his dying confession, declared that by diabolical art he had transformed himself into an animal, doubtless his *nagual;* and a young girl of some twelve years confessed that she had been transformed into a bird by the witches, and in one of her nocturnal flights had rested on the roof of the very house in which the good priest resided, which was some two leagues from her home. He wisely suggests that, perhaps, listening to some tale of sorcery, she had had a vivid dream, in which she seemed to take this flight. It is obvious, however, from his account, as well as from other sources, that the belief of the transformation into lower animals was and is one familiar to the superstitions of the Mayas.† The natives still continue to propitiate the ancient gods of the harvest, at the beginning of the season assembling at a ceremony called by the Spaniards the *misa milpera*, or "field mass," and by themselves *ti'ch*, "the stretching out of the hands."

The German traveler, Dr. Scherzer, when he visited, in 1854, the remote hamlet of Istlavacan, in Guatemala, peopled by Quiché Indians, discovered that they had preserved in this respect the usages of their ancestors almost wholly unaffected by the teachings of their various Christian curates. The "Master" still assigned the *naguals* to the new-born infants, copal was burned to their ancient gods in remote caves, and formulas of

* *Le Popol Vuh, ou Livre Sacré des Quichés*, p. 315 (Ed. Brasseur, Paris, 1861). In the Quiche myths, Gucumatz is the analogue of Quetzalcoatl in Aztec legend. Both names mean the same, "Feathered Serpent."

† Baeza's article is printed in the *Registro Yucateco*, Vol. i, p. 165, *seq.*

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invocation were taught by the veteran nagualists to their neophytes.*

These *Zahoris*,† as they are generally called in the Spanish of Central America, possessed many other mysterious arts besides that of such metamorphoses and of forecasting the future. They could make themselves invisible, and walk unseen among their enemies; they could in a moment transport themselves to distant places, and, as quickly returning, report what they had witnessed; they could create before the eyes of the spectator a river, a tree, a house, or an animal, where none such existed; they could cut open their own stomach, or lop a limb from another person, and immediately heal the wound or restore the severed member to its place; they could pierce themselves with knives and not bleed, or handle venomous serpents and not be bitten; they could cause mysterious sounds in the air, and fascinate animals and persons by their steady gaze; they could call visible and invisible spirits, and the spirits would come.

Among the native population of the State of Vera Cruz and elsewhere in southern Mexico these mysterious personages go by the name *padrinos*, godfathers, and are looked upon with a mixture of fear and respect. They are believed by the Indians to be able to cause sickness and domestic calamities, and are pronounced by intelligent whites to present "a combination of rascality, duplicity and trickery."‡

**17.** The details of the ceremonies and doctrines of Nagualism have never been fully revealed; but from isolated occurrences and partial confessions it is clear that its adherents formed a coherent association extending over most of southern

* "Wird ein Kind im Dorfe geboren, so erhält der heidnische Götzenpriester von diesem Ereignisse viel eher Kunde, als der katholische Pfarrer. Erst wenn dem neuen Weltbürger durch den Aj-quig das Horoskop gestellt, der Name irgend eines Thieres beigelegt, Mi-si-sal (das citronengelbe Harz des Rhus copallinum) verbrannt, ein Lieblingsgötze angerufen, und noche viele andere aberglaübische Mysterien verrichtet worden sind, wird das Kind nach dem Pfarrhause zur christlichen Taufe getragen. Das Thier, dessen Name dem Kinde kurz nach seiner Geburt vom Sonnenpriester beigelegt wird, gilt gewöhnlich auch als sein Schutzgeist (*nagual*) fürs ganze Leben." Dr. Karl Scherzer, *Die Indianer von Santa Catalina Istlavacan*, p. 11, Wien, 1856.

† The word *zahori*, of Arabic origin, is thus explained in the Spanish and English dictionary of Delpino (London, 1763): "So they call in Spain an impostor who pretends to see into the bowels of the earth, through stone walls, or into a man's body." Dr. Stoll says the Guatemala Indians speak of their diviners, the *Ah Kih*, as *zahorin*. *Guatemala*, s. 229.

‡ Emetorio Pineda, *Descripcion Geografica de Chiapas y Soconusco*, p. 22 (Mexico, 1845).

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Mexico and Guatemala, which everywhere was inspired by two ruling sentiments—detestation of the Spaniards and hatred of the Christian religion.

In their eyes the latter was but a cloak for the exactions, massacres and oppressions exerted by the former. To them the sacraments of the Church were the outward signs of their own subjugation and misery. They revolted against these rites in open hatred, or received them with secret repugnance and contempt. In the Mexican figurative manuscripts composed after the conquest the rite of baptism is constantly depicted as the symbol of religious persecution. Says a sympathetic student of this subject:

"The act of baptism is always inserted in their records of battles and massacres. Everywhere it conveys the same idea,—making evident to the reader that the pretext for all the military expeditions of the Spaniards was the enforced conversion to Christianity of the natives; a pretext on which the Spaniards seized in order to possess themselves of the land and its treasure, to rob the Indians of their wives and daughters, to enslave them, and to spill their blood without remorse or remission. One of these documents, dated in 1526, adds a trait of savage irony. A Spanish soldier is represented dragging a fugitive Indian from a lake by a lasso around his neck; while on the shore stands a monk ready to baptize the recreant on his arrival!"*

No wonder that the priests of the dark ritual of Nagualism for centuries after the conquest sought to annul the effects of the hated Christian sacraments by counteracting ceremonies of their own, as we are told they did by the historian Torquemada, writing from his own point of view in these words:

"The Father of Lies had his ministers who aided him, magicians and sorcerers, who went about from town to town, persuading the simple people to that which the Enemy of Light desired. Those who believed their deceits, and had been baptized, were washed on the head and breast by these sorcerers, who assured them that this would remove the effects of the chrism and the holy oils. I myself knew an instance where a person of prominence, who resided not far from the City of Mexico, was dying, and had received extreme unction; and when the priest had departed one of these diabolical ceremonialists entered, and washed all the parts which had been anointed by the holy oil with the intention to destroy its power."†

* Madier de Montjau, "Manuscrits Figuratifs de l' Ancien Mexique," in *Archives de la Société Americaine de France*, 1875, p. 215.

† Torquemada, *Monarquia Indiana*, Lib. xv, cap. 16.

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Similar instances are recorded by Jacinto de la Serna. He adds that not only did the Masters prescribe sacrifices to the Fire in order to annul the effects of extreme unction, but they delighted to caricature the Eucharist, dividing among their congregation a narcotic yellow mushroom for the bread, and the inebriating pulque for the wine. Sometimes they adroitly concealed in the pyx, alongside the holy wafer, some little idol of their own, so that they really followed their own superstitions while seemingly adoring the Host. They assigned a purely pagan sense to the sacred formula, "Father, Son and Holy Ghost," understanding it to be "Fire, Earth and Air," or the like.*

Whoever or whatever was an enemy to that religion so brutally forced upon these miserable creatures was to them an ally and a friend. Nuñez de la Vega tells us that he found written formulas among them reading: "O Brother Antichrist, Brother Antichrist, Brother Antichrist, come to our aid!"—pathetic and desperate appeal of a wretched race, ground to earth under the iron heels of a religious and military despotism.†

**18.** The association embraced various tribes and its members were classified under different degrees. The initiation into these was by solemn and often painful ceremonies. Local sodalities or brotherhoods were organized after the manner of those usual in the Roman Church; but instead of being named after St. John or the Virgin Mary they were dedicated to Judas Iscariot or Pontius Pilate out of derision and hatred of the teachings of the priests; or to the Devil or Antichrist, who were looked upon as powerful divinities in opposition to the Church.‡

There were certain recognized centres of the association, near which its most important dignitaries resided, and where their secret councils and most imposing ceremonies were held. One of these was Zamayac, in the province of Suchiltepec; a second near Huehuetan, Soconusco; a third at Totonicapan, Guate-

* De la Serna, *Manual de Ministros*, pp. 20, 21, 42, 162. The mushroom referred to was the *quauhnanacatl*, probably the same as the *teyhuinti* of Hernandez, *Hist. Plant. Nov. Hispan.*, Tom. ii, p. 358, who says that it is not dangerous to life, but disturbs the mind, inciting to laughter and intoxication.

† Actual slavery of the Indians in Mexico continued as late as the middle of the seventeenth century. See Cavo, *Tres Siglos de Mexico*, etc., Tom. ii, p. 11.

‡ Brasseur, *Hist. des Nations Civilisées de Mexique*, Tom. iv, p. 822.

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mæla; a fourth at Cancuc, Chiapas; a fifth at Teozapotlan, Oaxaca; and a few others may be surmised.

The high priest who resided at each of these centres exercised control over all the nagualistic teachers and practitioners in an extensive district. On the occasion of an official inquiry by the Spanish authorities it was ascertained that the high priest of Zamayac included under his rule nearly one thousand sub-priests,* and no doubt others of his rank were not less potent.

The unity between the members of the association over an indefinitely wide area was perfectly well known to the Spanish priests and civil authorities. The ceremonies, formulas and methods of procedure were everywhere identical or alike. This itself was justly regarded as a proof of the secret intelligence which existed among the members of this cabalistic guild.†

To a certain extent, and at least in some localities, as Chiapas and Guatemala, the priesthood of Nagualism was hereditary in particular families. This is especially stated by the historian Ordoñez y Aguiar, who had exceptional opportunities for acquainting himself with the facts.‡

A traveler of the first decade of this century, who has left us a number of curious details of the superstitions of the Christianized Indians in Mexico of that day, Benito Maria de Moxò, informs us that he had discovered the existence of different grades in the native soothsayers and medicine men, and that all in a given locality recognized the supremacy of one whom they referred to as "the little old man," *El Viejito.* But he was unable to ascertain by what superior traits or rights he obtained this distinction.§

According to some authorities, the highest grade of these native hierophants bore among the Nahuas the symbolic name

* *Informe del teniente general, Don Jacobo de Barba Figueroa, corregidor de la Provincia de Suchitepeque.* quoted by Brasseur.

† Jacinto de la Serna says: "Los mæstros de estas ceremonias son todos unos, y lo que sucede en esta cordillera en todas sucede." *Manual de Ministros,* p. 52. Speaking of the methods of the nagualists of Chiapas, Bishop Nuñez de la Vega writes: "Concuerdan los mas modernos con los mas antiguos que se practicaban en Mexico." *Constituciones Diocesanas,* p. 134.

‡ He observes that there were "familias de los tales sabios en las quales en manera de patrimonio se heredaban, succediendo los hijos á los padres, y principalmente su abominable secta de Nagualismo." *Historia del Cielo y de la Tierra,* MS., p. 7. Ordoñez advances various erudite reasons for believing that Nagualism is a religious belief whose theory and rites were brought from Carthage by Punic navigators in ancient times.

§ Maria de Moxó, *Cartas Mejicanas,* p. 270 (Genova, n. d.).

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of "flower weavers," *Xochimilca*, probably from the skill they had to deceive the senses by strange and pleasant visions.* In the south they were spoken of as "guardians," which may have been derived from the classes of priests so-called in the Zapotec religion.†

**19.** It will be seen from the above, that Nagualism, beginning in an ancient superstition dating back to the time of primitive barbarism, became after the Conquest a potent factor in the political and social development of the peoples among whom it existed; that it was the source from which was drawn and the means by which was sustained the race-hatred of the native American towards his foreign conquerors, smouldering for centuries, now and then breaking out in furious revolt and civil war.

There is strong reason to suspect its power where, for obvious reasons, it has not been demonstrated. It has always been a mystery and a matter of surprise to the historians of Yucatan how rapidly spread the plans of the insurrection which secured lasting independence for the natives, after these plans had been agreed upon by the two chiefs, Antonio Ay and Cecilio Chi, at the remote rancho of Xihum, in July, 1847. Such unanimity of action could only have been possible through the aid of a powerful, well-disciplined and widespread secret organization. There can scarcely be a doubt they were the chiefs or masters of the redoubtable order of Nagualism in the Peninsula.‡

There is no question that such was the case with the brief and bloody revolt of the Mayas in 1761. It suddenly broke out in a number of villages near Valladolid, Yucatan, headed by a full-blood native, Jacinto Can-Ek; but some of the participants afterwards confessed that it was the outcome of a conspiracy which had been preparing for a year.

When the appointed day arrived, Jacinto boldly announced himself as the high priest of the fraternity of sorcerers, a master and teacher of magic, and the lineal successor of the famous

* "*Xochimilca*, que asi llamavan à los mui sabios encantadores." Torquemada, *Monarquia Indiana*, Lib. xv, cap. 16.

† In Nahuatl, *tlapiani*, a guardian or watchman. The Zapotec priesthood was divided into the *huijatoos*, "greater guardians," and their inferiors, the *copavitoos*, "guardians of the gods." Carriedo, *Estudios Historicòs*, p. 93.

‡ See Eligio Ancona, *Historia de Yucatan*, Tom. iv, cap. 1 (Mérida, 1880).

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ancient prophet, Chilan Balam, "whose words cannot fail." In a stirring appeal he urged his fellow-countrymen to attack the Spaniards without fear of consequences.

"'Be not afraid,' he exclaimed, 'of their cannons and their forts; for among the many to whom I have taught the arts of magic (el arte de brujeria) there are fifteen chosen ones, marvelous experts, who by their mystic power will enter the fortress, slay the sentinels, and throw open the gates to our warriors. I shall take the leaves of the sacred tree, and folding them into trumpets, I shall call to the four winds of heaven, and a multitude of fighting men will hasten to our aid.'"*

Saying this, he took a sheet of paper, held it up to show that it was blank, folded it for a moment, and then spread it out covered with writing! This deft trick convinced his simple-minded hearers of the truth of his claims and they rushed to arms. He led them, clothed in the robe of the Virgin and with her crown on his head. But neither their enthusiasm nor their leader's art magic availed, and soon Jacinto and his followers fell victims to the stake and the gallows. After their death the dance of "the tiger," or of Chac-Mool—the "ghost dance" of the Mayas—was prohibited; and the use of the sacred drum—the favorite instrument of the native priests—was forbidden.†

In fact, wherever we have any full accounts of the revolts against the Spanish domination during the three centuries of its existence in New Spain, we can manifestly trace the guiding fingers of the powerful though hidden hand of Nagualism. An earlier revolt of the Mayas in Yucatan occurred in 1585. It was led by Andres Chi, a full-blood Indian, and a descendant of the ancient royal house of the Cocomes. He also announced himself as a priest of the ancient faith, a prophet and a worker of miracles, sent to instruct his own people in a new religion and to give them an independent political existence. Seized by

* The mention of the fifteen, 5 x 3, chosen disciples indicates that the same system of initiating by triplets prevailed in Yucatan as in Chiapas (see above, p. 19). The sacred tree is not named, but presumably it was the ceiba to which I refer elsewhere. The address of Jacinto was obtained from those present, and is given at length by the Jesuit Martin del Puerto, in his *Relacion hecho al Cabildo Eclesiastico por el preposito de la Compañia de Jesus, acerca de la muerte de Jacinto Can-Ek y socios*, Dec. 26, 1761. It is published, with other documents relating to this revolt, in the Appendix to the *Diccionario Universal*, edited by Orozco y Berra, Mexico, 1856. On the prophecies of Chilan Balam, see my *Essays of an Americanist*, pp. 255–273 (Philadelphia, 1890).

† Eligio Ancona, *Hist. de Yucatan*, Tom. ii, p. 152.

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the Spaniards, he was charged with idolatry, sorcery and disturbing the peace, and was ignominiously hanged.*

Not less definitely inspired by the same ideas was the Mixe Indian, known as "Don Pascual," who led the revolt of the Tehuantepec tribes in 1661. He sent out his summons to the "thirteen governors of the Zapotecs and Chontales" to come to his aid, and the insurrection threatened to assume formidable proportions, prevented only by bringing to bear upon the natives the whole power of the Roman Church through the Bishop of Oaxaca, Cuevas Davalos.†

Nearly the same locality had been the scene of the revolt of the Zapotecs in 1550, when they were led by a native priest who claimed to be an incarnation of the old god Quetzalcoatl, the patron deity of the nagualists.‡

In the city of Mexico itself, in the year 1692, there was a violent outbreak of the natives, when they destroyed three million dollars worth of property. Doubtless this was partly attributable to the scarcity of food which prevailed; but that the authorities traced it also to some secret ceremonials is evident from the law which was immediately passed forbidding the Indians to wear the *piochtli*, or scalp-lock, a portion of the hair preserved from birth as part of the genethliac rituals,§ and the especial enactments against the *octli*.

As for the revolt of the Tzentals of Chiapas, in 1712, it was clearly and confessedly under the leadership of the nagualistic priesthood, as I shall indicate on a later page.

The history of the native American race under the Spanish power in North America has never yet been written with the slightest approach to thoroughness. He who properly qualifies

* See Pedro Sanchez de Aguilar, *Informe contra Idolum Cultores en Yucathan* (Madrid, 1639); Eligio Ancona, *Historia de Yucatan*, Tom. ii, pp. 128, 129.

† The chief authority on this revolt is Juan de Torres Castillo, *Relacion de lo Sucedido en las Provincias de Nexapa, Iztepex y Villa Alta* (Mexico, 1662). See also Cavo, *Los Tres Siglos de Mexico durante el Gobierno Español*, Tom. ii, p. 41, and a pamphlet by Christoval Manso de Contreras, *Relacion cierta y verdadera de lo que sucedio en esta Provincia de Tehuantepec*, etc. (printed at Mexico, 1661), which I know only through the notes of Dr. Berendt. Mr. H. H. Bancroft, in his very meagre account of this event, mistakingly insists that it took place in 1660. *History of Mexico*, Vol. iii, p. 164.

‡ See Brasseur de Bourbourg, *Histoire des Nations Civilisées de la Mexique*, Tom iv, 824.

§ Cavo, *Los Tres Siglos*, etc., Tom. ii, p. 82. On the use and significance of the *piochtli* we have some information in Vetancurt, *Teatro Mexicano*, Tom. ii, p. 464, and de la Serna, *Manual de Ministros*, pp. 166, 167. It was the badge of a certain order of the native priesthood.

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himself for that task will certainly reach the conclusion expressed a number of years ago by the eminent American antiquary and historian, Mr. E. G. Squier, in these words:

"Among the ruling and priestly classes of the semi-civilized nations of America, there has always existed a mysterious bond, a secret organization, which all the disasters to which they have been subjected have not destroyed. It is to its present existence that we may attribute those simultaneous movements of the aborigines of Mexico and Central America, which have more than once threatened the complete subversion of the Spanish power."*

That mysterious bond, that secret organization, is *Nagualism.*

**20.** A remarkable feature in this mysterious society was the exalted position it assigned to Women. Not only were they admitted to the most esoteric degrees, but in repeated instances they occupied the very highest posts in the organization. According to the traditions of the Tzentals and Pipils of Chiapas, when their national hero, Votan, constructed by the breath of his mouth his darkened shrine at Tlazoaloyan, in Soconusco, he deposited in it the sacred books and holy relics, and constituted a college of venerable sages to be its guardians; but placed them all in subjection to a high priestess, whose powers were absolute.†

The veracious Pascual de Andagoya asserts from his own knowledge that some of these female adepts had attained the rare and peculiar power of being in two places at once, as much as a league and a half apart;‡ and the repeated references to them in the Spanish writings of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries confirm the dread in which they were held and the extensive influence they were known to control. In the sacraments of Nagualism, Woman was the primate and hierophant.

**21.** This was a lineal inheritance from pre-Columbian times. In many native American legends, as in others from the old world, some powerful enchantress is remembered as the founder of the State, mistress of men through the potency of her magic powers.

* *Adventures on the Musquito Shore*, by S. A. Ward, pseudonym of Mr. Squier, p. 258 (New York, 1855).

† Nuñez de la Vega, *Constituciones Diocesanas*, p. 10, and comp. Brasseur de Bourbourg, *Hist. des Nat. Civ. de Mexique*, Tom. i, p. 74.

‡ Herrera, *Hist. de las Indias Occidentales*, Dec. ii, Lib. iii, cap. 5.

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Such, among the Aztecs, was the sorceress who built the city of Mallinalco, on the road from Mexico to Michoacan, famous even after the conquest for the skill of its magicians, who claimed descent from her.* Such, in Honduras, was Coamizagual, queen of Cerquin, versed in all occult science, who died not, but at the close of her earthly career rose to heaven in the form of a beautiful bird, amid the roll of thunder and the flash of lightning.†

According to an author intimately familiar with the Mexican nagualists, the art they claimed to possess of transforming themselves into the lower animals was taught their predecessors by a woman, a native Circe, a mighty enchantress, whose usual name was Quilaztli (the etymology of which is unknown), but who bore also four others, representing her four metamorphoses, Cohuacihuatl, the Serpent Woman; Quauhcihuatl, the Eagle Woman; Yaocihuatl, the Warrior Woman; and Tzitzimecihuatl, the Specter Woman.‡

The powers of these queens of magic extended widely among their sex. We read in the chronicles of ancient Mexico that when Nezahualpilli, the king, oppressed the tribes of the coast, the *tierra caliente*, they sent against him, not their warriors, but their witches. These cast upon him their fatal spells, so that when he walked forth from his palace, blood burst from his mouth, and he fell prone and dead.§

In Guatemala, as in ancient Delphos, the gods were believed to speak through the mouths of these inspired seeresses, and at the celebration of victories they enjoyed a privilege so strange and horrible that I quote it from the old manuscript before me without venturing a translation:

" . . . . Despues de sacrificar los antiguos algun hombre, despedaçandolo, si era de los que avian cogido en guerra, dicen que guardaban el

* Acosta, *Hist. Nat. y Moral de las Indias*, Lib. vii, cap. 5.

† The story is given in Herrera, *Hist. de las Indias*, Dec. iv, Lib. viii, cap. 4. The name Coamizagual is translated in the account as "Flying Tigress." I cannot assign it this sense in any dialect.

‡ Jacinto de la Serna, *Manual de Ministros*, p. 138. Sahagun identifies Quilaztli with Tonantzin, the common mother of mankind and goddess of child-birth (*Hist. de Nueva España*, Lib. i, cap. 6, Lib. vi, cap. 27). Further particulars of her are related by Torquemada, *Monarquia Indiana*, Lib. ii, cap. 2. The *tzitzime* were mysterious elemental powers, who, the Nahuas believed, were destined finally to destroy the present world (Sahagun, l. c., Lib. vi, cap. 8). The word means "flying haired" (Serna).

§ Torquemada, *Monarquia Indiana*, Lib. ii, cap. 62.

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miembro genital y los testiculos del tal sacrificado, y se los daban à una vieja que tenian por profeta, para que los comiese, y le pedian rogasse à su idolo les diesse mas captivos." *

When Captain Pedro de Alvarado, in the year 1524, was marching upon Quetzaltanango, in Guatemala, just such a fearful old witch took her stand at the summit of the pass, with her familiar in the shape of a dog, and "by spells and nagualistic incantations" undertook to prevent his approach.†

As in the earliest, so in the latest accounts. The last revolt of the Indians of Chiapas occurred among the Zotzils in 1869. The cause of it was the seizure and imprisonment by the Spanish authorities of a "mystical woman," known to the whites as Santa Rosa, who, together with one of their *ahaus* or chieftains, had been suspected of fomenting sedition. The natives marched thousands strong against the city of San Cristobal, where the prisoners were, and secured their liberation; but their leader, Ignacio Galindo, was entrapped and shot by the Spaniards, and the mutiny was soon quelled.‡

**22.** But perhaps the most striking instance is that recorded in the history of the insurrection of the Tzentals of Chiapas, in 1713. They were led by an Indian girl, a native Joan of Arc, fired by like enthusiasm to drive from her country the hated foreign oppressors, and to destroy every vestige of their presence. She was scarcely twenty years old, and was known to the Spaniards as Maria Candelaria. She was the leader of what most historians call a religious sect, but what Ordoñez y Aguiar, himself a native of Chiapas, recognizes as the powerful secret association of Nagualism, determined on the extirpation of the white race. He estimates that in Chiapas alone there were nearly seventy thousand natives under her orders—doubtless an exaggeration—and asserts that the conspiracy extended far into

* Fr. Tomas Coto, *Diccionario de la Lengua Cakchiquel*, MS., s. v. *Sacrificar;* in the Library of the American Philosophical Society at Philadelphia.

† "Trataron de valerse del arte de los encantos y *naguales*" are the words of the author, Fuentes y Guzman, in his *Recordacion Florida*, Tom. i, p. 50. In the account of Bernal Diaz, it reads as if this witch and her dog had both been sacrificed; but Fuentes is clear in his statement, and had other documents at hand.

‡ Teobert Maler, "Mémoire sur l'Etat de Chiapas," in the *Rêvue d' Ethnographie*, Tom. iii, pp. 309–311. This writer also gives some valuable facts about the Indian insurrection in the Sierra de Alicia, in 1873.

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the neighboring tribes, who had been ordered to await the result of the effort in Chiapas.

Her authority was absolute, and she was merciless in requiring obedience to it. The disobedient were flayed alive or roasted over a slow fire. She and all her followers took particular pleasure in manifesting their hatred and contempt for the religion of their oppressors. They defiled the sacred vessels of the churches, imitated with buffoonery the ceremonies of the mass, which she herself performed, and stoned to death the priests whom they caught.

Of course, her attempt against the power of Spain was hopeless. It failed after a bitter and protracted conquest, characterized by the utmost inhumanity on both sides. But when her followers were scattered and killed, when the victorious whites had again in their hands all the power and resources of the country, not their most diligent search, nor the temptation of any reward, enabled them to capture Maria Candelaria, the heroine of the bloody drama. With a few trusty followers she escaped to the forest, and was never again heard of.*

More unfortunate were her friends and lieutenants, the priestesses of Guistiupan and Yajalon, who had valiantly seconded Maria in her patriotic endeavors. Seized by the Spaniards, they met the fate which we can easily imagine, though the historian has mercifully thrown a veil on its details.†

**23.** Of just such a youthful prophetess did Mr. E. G. Squier hear during his travels in Central America, a "*sukia* woman," as she was called by the coast Indians, one who lived alone mid the ruins of an old Maya temple, a sorceress of twenty years, loved and feared, holding death and life in her hands.‡ Per-

* The long account given by Mr. H. H. Bancroft of this insurrection is a travesty of the situation drawn from bitterly prejudiced Spanish sources, of course, utterly out of sympathy with the motives which prompted the native actors. See his *History of the Pacific States*, Vol. ii, p. 696, *sqq*. Ordoñez y Aguiar, who lived on the spot within a generation of the occurrences, recognizes in Maria Candelaria (whose true name Bancroft does not give) the real head of the rebellion, "quien ordenaba los ardides del motin; . . . . de lo que principalmente tratabau las leyes fundamentales de su secta, era de que no quedase rastro alguno de que los Europeos havian pisado este suelo." His account is in his unpublished work, *Historia del Cielo y de la Tierra*, written at Guatemala about 1780. Juarros, speaking of their rites, says of them: "Apostando de la fé, profanando los vasos sagrados, y ofreciendo sacrilegos cultos á una indizuela." *Historia de la Ciudad de Guatemala*, Tom. i, p. 17.

† Bancroft, ubi suprà, p. 705, note. One was hanged, whom Garcia Pelaez calls "una india bruja." *Memorias para la Historia de Guatemala*, Tom. ii, p. 153.

‡ Squier, ubi suprà, passim.

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haps his account is somewhat fanciful; it is so, indeed; but it is grounded on the unshaken beliefs and ancient traditions of the natives of those climes, and on customs well known to those who reside there.

The late distinguished Americanist, the Abbé Brasseur de Bourbourg, during his long travels in Mexico and Central America, had occasion more than once to come in contact with this trait of the ancient faith of the Nagualists, still alive in their descendants. Among the Zapotecs of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec he saw one of the queens of the mystic fraternity, and he describes her with a warmth which proves that he had not lost his eye for the beautiful.

"She wore a piece of light-green stuff loosely folded around her form at the hips, and falling to a little distance above the ankle; a jacket of red silk gauze with short sleeves and embroidered with gold, clothed the upper part of her person, veiling her bosom, upon which lay a chain of heavy gold pieces, pierced and strung on a cord. Her rich black hair was divided on the forehead, and drawn back in two splendid tresses fastened with blue ribbons, while a white muslin kerchief encircled her head like the calantica of the ancient Egyptians. Never in my life have I seen a more striking figure of an Isis or a Cleopatra.

"There was something strange in her expression. Her eyes were the blackest and the brightest in the world; but there were moments when she suddenly paused, leaned against the billiard table or the wall, and they became fixed and dead like those of a corpse. Then a fiery glance would shoot from beneath her dark lashes, sending a chill to the heart of the one to whom it was directed. Was it madness, or was it, as those around her believed, a momentary absence of soul, an absorption of her spirit into its *nagual*, a transportation into an unknown world? Who shall decide?"*

**24.** It would be a mistake to suppose that Nagualism was an incoherent medley of superstitions, a mass of jumbled fragments derived from the ancient paganism. My study of it has led me to a widely different conclusion. It was a perpetuation of a well-defined portion of the native cult, whose sources we are able to trace long anterior to the period of the conquest, and which had no connection with the elaborate and bloody ritual of the Aztecs. The evidence to this effect is cogent.

Wherever in later days the Catholic priests found out the

* *Voyage á l'Isthmus de Tehuantepec*, p. 164. He adds a number of particulars of the power she was supposed to exercise.

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holy places and sacred objects of the nagualists, they were in caves or deep rock-recesses, not in artificial structures. The myths they gleaned, and the names of the gods they heard, also point to this as a distinguishing peculiarity. An early instance is recorded among the Nahuas of Mexico. In 1537 Father Perea discovered a cavern in a deep ravine at Chalma, near Mallinalco (a town famous for its magicians), which was the sanctuary of the deity called *Oztoteotl*, the Cave God (*oztotl*, cave; *teotl*, god), "venerated throughout the whole empire of Montezuma."* He destroyed the image of the god, and converted the cavern into a chapel.

We cannot err in regarding Oztoteotl as merely another name of the Nahuatl divinity, Tepeyollotl, the Heart, or Inside, of the Mountain, who in the Codex Borgia and the Codex Vaticanus is represented seated upon or in a cavern. His name may equally well be translated "the Heart of the Place," or "of the Town."

Dr. Eduard Seler has shown beyond reasonable question that this divinity did not originally belong to the Aztec Pantheon, but was introduced from the South, either from the Zapotecs, the Mixtecs, or the Mayan tribes, beyond these.† The Cave God of the Aztecs is identical with the Votan of the Tzentals of Chiapas, and with the U-q'ux Uleuh of the Quiches of Guatemala, and probably with the Cozaana of the Zapotecs.

The rites of all of these were conducted in caverns, and there have been preserved several interesting descriptions of the contents of these sacred places. That relating to the "dark house of Votan" is given thus in the work of the Bishop of Chiapas:

> "Votan is the third hero who is named in the calendar, and some of his descendants still reside in the town of Teopisca, where they are known as Votans. He is sometimes referred to as Lord of the Sacred Drum, and he is said to have seen the great wall (which must have been the Tower of Babel), and to have divided this land among the Indians, and given to each tribe its language.

* "Que era venerado en todo el imperio de Montezuma." See *Diccionario Universal*, Appendice, s. v. (Mexico, 1856).

† "Dass der Gott Tepeyollotl im Zapotekenlande und weiter südwärts seine Wurzeln hat, und dem eigentlichen Aztekischen Olymp fremd ist, darüber kann kein Zweifel mehr obwalten." See Dr. Seler's able discussion of the subject in the *Compte-Rendu* of the Seventh International Congress of Americanists, p. 559, *seq.* The adoption of subterranean temples was peculiarly a Zapotecan trait. "Notandose principalmente en muchos adoratorios de los Zapotecos, estan los mas de ellos cubiertos, ò en subterraneos espaciosos y lòbregos." Carriedo, *Estudios Historicos*, Tom. i, p. 26.

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"They say further that he once dwelt in Huehuetan, a town in the province of Soconusco. Near there, at the place called Tlazoaloyan, he constructed, by blowing with his breath, a dark house, and put tapirs in the river, and in the house a great treasure, and left all in charge of a noble lady, assisted by guardians (*tlapiane*) to preserve. This treasure consisted of earthenware vases with covers of the same material; a stone, on which were inscribed the figures of the ancient native heroes as found in the calendar; *chalchiuites*, which are green stones; and other superstitious objects.

"All of these were taken from the cave, and publicly burned in the plaza of Huehuetan on the occasion of our first diocesan visit there in 1691, having been delivered to us by the lady in charge and the guardians. All the Indians have great respect for this Votan, and in some places they call him 'the Heart of the Towns.'"*

The English priest, Thomas Gage, who was curate of a parish among the Pokonchi Indians of Guatemala about 1630, relates his discovery of such a cave, in which the idol was preserved, and gives this description of it:

"We found the Idol standing upon a low stool covered with a linen cloth. The substance of it was wood, black shining like jet, as if it had been painted or smoked; the form was of a man's head unto the shoulders, without either Beard or Mustachoes; his look was grim, with a wrinkled forehead, and broad staring eyes.

"They boasted of this their god, saying that he had plainly told them they should not believe anything I preached of Christ, but follow the old ways of their forefathers."†

The black color here mentioned was a relic of ancient symbolism, referring to the night, darkness, and the obscurity of the holy cavern. Vetancurt informs us that the priests of the ancient paganism were accustomed to rub their faces and bodies with an ointment of fat and pine soot when they went to sacrifice in the forests, so that they looked as black as negroes‡ In the extract from Nuñez de la Vega already given, *Ical Ahau*, the "Black King," is named as one of the divinities of the nagualists.

In some parts the principal idol found in the caves was the

* *Constituciones Diocesanas*, pp. 9, 10.

† Gage, *A New Survey of the West Indies*, pp. 389, 393.

‡ *Teatro Mexicano*, Tratado iii, cap. 11. Mr. Bandelier has called attention to the naming of one of the principal chiefs among the Aztecs, *Tlilancalqui*, "Man of the Dark House," and thinks it related to the Votan myth. *Twelfth Annual Report of the Peabody Museum*, p. 689.

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mummied or exsiccated body of some former distinguished priest or chieftain. One such is recorded by Bartholomé de Pisa, which was found among the Zapotecs of Coatlan. It bore a name taken from the calendar, that of the tenth day, and was alleged to be the preserved cadaver of a celebrated ruler.* Another interesting example is narrated by Villa Señor y Sanchez,† who describes it as an eye-witness. It was discovered in a spacious cave located some distance to the west of the city of Mexico, in Nahuatl territory, on the side of what was known as "the Sun mountain"—*la Mesa de Tonati.* He speaks of it as remarkably well preserved, "both the muscles and the bones."

"It was seated in an armchair which served for a throne, and was clothed in a mantle, which fell from the shoulders to the feet. This was richly adorned with precious stones, which, according to the native custom, were sewed into the texture of the cloth. The figure also wore shoulder straps, collars, bracelets and fastenings of silver. From its forehead rose a crown of beautiful feathers of different colors. arranged so that one color should alternate with another. The left hand was resting on the arm of the chair, while in the right was a sharp cutlass with silver mountings. At its feet were several vases of fine stone, as marble and alabaster, in which were offerings of blood and meat, obtained from the sacrifices."

The same writer refers to other examples of these sacred caves which he had seen in his journeys. One was near the town of Teremendo, where the sides and roof had been artificially dressed into the shape of huge arches. A natural altar had been provided in a similar manner, and on it, at the time of his visit, were numerous idols in the figures of men and animals, and before them fresh offerings of copal and food. Elsewhere he refers to many such caverns still in use as places resorted to by the natives in *la gran Sierra de Tlascala.*‡

These extracts prove the extent of this peculiar worship and the number of these subterranean temples in recent generations. The fame of some of the greater ones of the past still survives, as the vast grotto of Chalcatongo, near Achiutla, which was the sepulchral vault of its ancient kings; that of Totomachiapa, a

* Herrera, *Historia de las Indias Occidentales,* Dec. iii, Lib. iii, cap. 14.

† Villa Señor, *Teatro Americano,* Lib. v, cap. 38 (Mexico, 1747). Father Cavo adds that there were signs of human sacrifices present, but of this I can find no evidence in the earlier reports. Comp. Cavo, *Los Tres Siglos de Mexico durante el Gobierno Español,* Tom. ii, p. 128.

‡ *Teatro Americano,* Lib. ii, cap. 11; Lib. iii, cap. 13.

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solemn scene of sacrifice for the ancient priests; that of Justlahuaca, near Sola (Oaxaca), which was a place of worship of the Zapotecs long after the Conquest; and that in the Cerro de Monopostiac, near San Francisco del Mar. *

The intimate meaning of this cave-cult was the worship of the Earth. The Cave God, the Heart of the Hills, really typified the Earth, the Soil, from whose dark recesses flow the limpid streams and spring the tender shoots of the food-plants, as well as the great trees. To the native Mexican, the Earth was the provider of food and drink, the common Father of All; so that to this day, when he would take a solemn oath, he stoops to the earth, touches it with his hand, and repeats the solemn formula: *Cuix amo nechitla in toteotzin?* "Does not our Great God see me?"

**25.** The identity of the Tepeyollotl of the Nahuas and the Votan of the Tzentals is shown not only in the oneness of meaning of the names, but in the fact that both represent the *third* day in the ritual calendar. For this reason I take it, we find the number *three* so generally a sacred number in the symbolism of the nagualists. We have already learned in the extract from Nuñez de la Vega that the neophytes were instructed in classes of three. To this day in Soteapan the fasts and festivals appointed by the native ministrants are three days in duration.† The semi-Christianized inhabitants of the Sierra of Nayerit, the Nahuatl-speaking Chotas, continued in the last century to venerate three divinities, the Dawn, the Stone and the Serpent;‡ analogous to a similar "trinity" noted by Father Duran among the ancient Aztecs.§

The number *nine*, that is, 3 x 3, recurs so frequently in the conjuration formulas of the Mexican sorcerers that de la Serna exclaims: "It was the Devil himself who inculcated into them this superstition about the number nine."‖

* See Mühlenpfordt, *Mexico*, Bd. ii, pp. 200–266; Brasseur, *Hist. des Nations Civ. de la Mexique*, Vol. iv, p. 821; Herrera, *Historia de las Indias*, Dec. iii, Lib. iii, cap. 12, etc.

† *Diccionario Universal*, Appendice, s. v.

‡ Their names were Ta Yoapa, Father Dawn; Ta Te, Father Stone; Coanamoa, the Serpent which Seizes. *Dicc. Univ.*, App., Tom. iii, p. 11.

§ Duran, *Historia de los Indios*, Tom. ii, p. 140. They were Tota, Our Father; Yollometli, the Heart of the Maguey (probably pulque); and Topiltzin, Our Noble One (probably Quetzalcoatl, to whom this epithet was often applied).

‖ "Fue el Demonio que les dió la superstición del numero nueve." *Manual de Ministros*, p. 197.

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The other number sacred to the nagualists was *seven*. I have, in a former essay, given various reasons for believing that this was not derived from the seven days of the Christian week, but directly from the native calendar. * Nuñez de la Vega tells us that the patron of the seventh day was *Cuculcan*, "the Feathered Serpent," and that many nagualists chose him as their special protector. As already seen, in Guatemala the child finally accepted its *naual* when seven years old; and among some of the Nahuatl tribes of Mexico the *tonal* and the calendar name was formally assigned on the seventh day after birth.† From similar impressions the Cakchiquels of Guatemala maintained that when the lightning strikes the earth the "thunder stone" sinks into the soil, but rises to the surface after seven years. ‡

The three and the seven were the ruling numbers in the genealogical trees of the Pipiles of San Salvador. The "tree" was painted with *seven* branches representing degrees of relationship within which marriage was forbidden unless a man had performed some distinguished exploit in war, when he could marry beyond the nearest *three* degrees of relationship.§ Another combination of 3 and 7, by multiplication, explains the customs among the Mixes of deserting for 21 days a house in which a death has occurred. ‖

The indications are that the nagualists derived these numbers from the third and seventh days of the calendar "month" of twenty days. Tepeololtec, the Cave God, was patron of the third day and also "Lord of Animals," the transformation into which was the test of nagualistic power.¶ Tlaloc, god of the mountains and the rains, to whom the seventh day was hallowed, was represented by the nagualistic symbol of a snake doubled and twisted on itself, and was generally portrayed in connection with the "Feathered Serpent" (Quetzalcoatl, Cuculchan, Gukumatz, all names meaning this), represented as carrying his medicine bag, *xiquipilli*, and incensory, the apparatus of the

* *The Native Calendar of Central America and Mexico*, p. 12.

† Motolinia, *Ritos Antiguos, Sacrificios e Idolatrias de los Indios de la Nueva España*, p. 340 (in *Coleccion de Documentos ineditos para la Historia de España*).

‡ Thomas Coto, *Vocabulario de la lengua Cakchiquel*, MS., sub voce, *Rayo*.

§ Herrera, *Historia de las Indias*, Dec. iv, Lib. viii, cap. 10.

‖ *Diccionario Universal*, Appendice, ubi suprá.

¶ 'Señor de los Animales." *Codex Telleriano-Remensis*, Parte ii, Lam. iv.

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native illuminati, his robe marked with the sign of the cross to show that he was Lord of the Four Winds and of Life. *

**26.** The nagualistic rites were highly symbolic, and the symbols used had clearly defined meanings, which enable us to analyze the religious ideas underlying this mysterious cult.

The most important symbol was Fire. It was regarded as the primal element and the immediate source of life. Father Nicolas de Leon has the following suggestive passage in this connection :

"If any of their old superstitions has remained more deeply rooted than another in the hearts of these Indians, both men and women, it is this about fire and its worship, and about making new fire and preserving it for a year in secret places. We should be on the watch for this, and when in their confessions they speak of what the Fire said and how the Fire wept, expressions which we are apt to pass by as unintelligible, we must lay our hands on them for reprehension. We should also be on the watch for their baptism by Fire, a ceremony called the *yiahuiltoca*,† shortly after the birth of a child when they bestow on it the surnames ; nor must the lying-in women and their assistants be permitted to speak of Fire as the father and mother of all things and the author of nature ; because it is a common saying with them that Fire is present at the birth and death of every creature."

This curious ceremony derived its name from the *yiahuitli*, a plant not unlike the absinthe, the powdered leaves of which, according to Father Sahagun, the natives were accustomed to throw into the flames as an offering to the fire.‡ Long after the conquest, and probably to this day, the same custom prevails in Mexico, the fumes and odor of the burning leaves being considered very salubrious and purifying to the air of the sick room §

* See Dr. Seler's minute description in the *Compte Rendu* of the Eighth Session of the Congrés International des Américanistes, pp. 588, 589. In one of the conjuration formulas given by de la Serna (*Manual de Ministros*, p. 212) the priest says: "Yo soy el sacerdote, el dios *Quetzalcoatl*, que se bajará al infierno, y subiré á lo superior, y hasta los nueve infiernos." This writer, who was very competent in the Nahuatl, translates the name Quetzalcoatl by "culebra con cresta" (*id.*, p. 171), an unusual, but perhaps a correct rendering.

† His words here are somewhat obscure. They are, "El baptismo de fuego, en donde las ponen los sobre nombres que llaman *yahuiltoca*, quando nacen." This may be translated, "The baptism of fire in which they confer the names which they call *yahuiltoca*." The obscurity is in the Nahuatl, as the word *toca* may be a plural of *tocaitl*, name, as well as the verb *toca*, to throw upon. The passage is from the *Camino del Cielo*, fol. 100, verso.

‡ Sahagun, *Historia de la Nueva España*, Lib. iv, cap. 25.

§ It is mentioned as useful for this purpose by the early physicians, Francisco Ximenes, *Cuatro Libros de la Naturaleza*, p. 144 ; Hernandez, *Hist. Plant. Novæ Hispaniæ*, Tom.

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The word *yiahuiltoca* means "the throwing of the *yiauhtli*" (from *toca*, to throw upon with the hands). Another name for the ceremony, according to Father Vetancurt, who wrote a century later than Leon, was *apehualco*, which has substantially the same meaning, "a throwing upon" or "a throwing away." * He adds the interesting particulars that it was celebrated on the fourth day after the birth of the child, during which time it was deemed essential to keep the fire burning in the house, but not to permit any of it to be carried out, as that would bring bad luck to the child.

Jacinto de la Serna also describes this ceremony, to which he gives the name *tlecuixtliliztli*, "which means that they pass the infant over the fire;" and elsewhere he adds: "The worship of fire is the greatest stumbling-block to these wretched idolaters."†

**27.** Other ceremonies connected with fire worship took place in connection with the manufacture of the pulque, or *octli*, the fermented liquor obtained from the sap of the maguey plant. The writer just quoted, de Vetancurt, states that the natives in his day, when they had brewed the new pulque and it was ready to be drunk, first built a fire, walked in procession around it and threw some of the new liquor into the flames, chanting the while an invocation to the god of inebriation, Tezcatzoncatl, to descend and be present with them.

This was distinctly a survival of an ancient doctrine which connected the God of Fire with the Gods of Drunkenness, as we may gather from the following quotation from the history composed by Father Diego Duran:

"The *octli* was a favorite offering to the gods, and especially to the God of Fire. Sometimes it was placed before a fire in vases, sometimes

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ii, p. 200. Capt. Bourke, in his recent article on "The Medicine Men of the Apaches" (in *Ninth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology*, p. 521), suggests that the *yiahuilli* of the Aztecs is the same as the "hoddentin," the pollen of a variety of cat-tail rush which the Apaches in a similar manner throw into the fire as an offering. Hernandez, however, describes the *yiahuilli* as a plant with red flowers, growing on mountains and hill-sides—no species of rush, therefore. De la Serna says it is the anise plant, and that with it the natives perform the conjuration of the "yellow spirit" (conjuro de amarillo espiritado), that is, of the Fire (*Manual de Ministros*, p. 197).

* From the verb *apeua*. Vetancurt's description is in his *Teatro Mexicano*, Tom. i, pp. 462, 463 (Ed. Mexico, 1870).

† His frequent references to it show this. See his *Manual de Ministros*, pp. 16, 20, 22, 24, 36, 40, 66, 174, 217, etc. The word *tlecuixtliliztli* is compounded of *tlecuilli*, the hearth or fireplace, and *ixtliluia*, to darken with smoke.

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it was scattered upon the flames with a brush, at other times it was poured out around the fireplace."*

**28.** The high importance of the fire ceremonies in the secret rituals of the modern Mayas is plainly evident from the native Calendars, although their signification has eluded the researches of students, even of the laborious Pio Perez, who was so intimately acquainted with their language and customs. In these Calendars the fire-priest is constantly referred to as *ah-toc*, literally "the fire-master." The rites he celebrates recur at regular intervals of twenty days (the length of one native month) apart. They are four in number. On the first he takes the fire; on the second he kindles the fire; on the third he gives it free play, and on the fourth he extinguishes it. A period of five days is then allowed to elapse, when these ceremonies are recommenced in the same order. Whatever their meaning, they are so important that in the *Buk Xoc*, or General Computation of the Calendar, preserved in the mystic "Books of Chilan Balam," there are special directions for these fire-masters to reckon the proper periods for the exercise of their strange functions.†

**29.** What, now, was the sentiment which underlay this worship of fire? I think that the facts quoted, and especially the words of Father de Leon, leave no doubt about it. Fire was worshiped as the life-giver, the active generator, of animate existence. This idea was by no means peculiar to them. It repeatedly recurs in Sanskrit, in Greek and in Teutonic mythology, as has been ably pointed out by Dr. Hermann Cohen.‡ The fire-god Agni (*ignis*) is in the Vedas the Maker of men; Prometheus steals the fire from heaven that he may with it animate the human forms he has moulded of clay; even the connection of the pulque with the fire is paralleled in Greek mythos, where Dionysos is called *Pyrigenes*, the "fire-born."

Among the ancient Aztecs the god of fire was called the

* Duran, *Historia de los Indios de la Nueva España*, Tom. ii, p. 240. Sahagun adds that the *octli* was poured on the hearth at four separate points, doubtless the four cardinal points. *Historia de Nueva España*, Lib. i, cap. 13. De la Serna describes the same ceremony as current in his day, *Manual de Ministros*, p. 35. The invocation ran:—"Shining Rose, light-giving Rose, receive and rejoice my heart before the God."

† A copy of these strange "Books of Chilan Balam" is in my possession. I have described them in my *Essays of an Americanist* (Philadelphia, 1890).

‡ See his remarks on "Apperception der Menschenzeugung als Feuerbereitung," in the *Zeitschrift für Völkerpsychologie*, Bd. vi, s. 113, *seq.*

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oldest of gods, *Huehueteotl*, and also "Our Father," *Tota*, as it was believed from him all things were derived.* Both among them and the Mayas, as I have pointed out in a previous work, he was supposed to govern the generative proclivities and the sexual relations. † Another of his names was *Xiuhtecutli*, which can be translated "God of the Green Leaf," that is, of vegetable fecundity and productiveness. ‡

To transform themselves into a globe or ball of fire was, as we have seen (antè, p. 21), a power claimed by expert nagualists, and to handle it with impunity, or to blow it from the mouth, was one of their commonest exhibitions. Nothing so much proved their superiority as thus to master this potent element.

**30.** The same name above referred to, "the Heart of the Town," or "of the Hills," was that which at a comparatively late date was applied to an idol of green stone preserved with religious care in a cavern in the Cerro de Monopostiac, not far from San Francisco del Mar. The spot is still believed by the natives to be enchanted ground and protected by superhuman powers. §

These green stones, called *chalchiuitl*, of jadeite, nephrite, green quartz, or the like, were accounted of peculiar religious significance throughout southern Mexico, and probably to this day many are preserved among the indigenous population as amulets and charms. They were often carved into images, either in human form or representing a frog, the latter apparently the symbol of the waters and of fertility. Bartholomè de Alva refers to them in a passage of his Confessionary. The priest asks the penitent:

"Dost thou possess at this very time little idols of green stone, or frogs made of it (*in chalchiuh coconeme, chalchiuh tamazoltin*)?

"Dost thou put them out in the sun to be warmed? Dost thou keep them wrapped in cotton coverings, with great respect and veneration?

"Dost thou believe, and hold for very truth, that these green stones give thee food and drink, even as thy ancestors believed, who died in their idolatry? Dost thou believe that they give thee success and prosperity

* Sahagun, *Historia de Nueva España*, Lib. i, cap. 13. The Nahuatl text is more definite than the Spanish translation.

† See my *Myths of the New World*, p. 154, *seq.*

‡ In the Nahuatl language the word *xihuitl* (*xiuitl*) has four meanings: a plant, a turquoise, a year and a comet.

§ J. B. Carriedo, *Estudios Historicos del Estado Oaxaqueño*, Tom. i, p. 82, etc.

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and good things, and all that thou hast or wishest? Because we know very well that many of you so believe at this very time." *

Down to quite a recent date, and perhaps still, these green stones are employed in certain ceremonies in vogue among the Indians of Oaxaca in order to ensure a plenteous maize harvest. The largest ear of corn in the field is selected and wrapped up in a cloth with some of these chalchiuite. At the next corn-planting it is taken to the field and buried in the soil. This is believed to be a relic of the worship of the ancient Zapotec divinity, Quiegolani, who presided over cultivated fields.†

They are still in use among the natives as lucky stones or amulets. In the Zotzil insurrection of 1869, already referred to, one was found suspended to the neck of one of the slain Indians. It came into the possession of M. Maler, who has described and figured it.‡ It represents a human head with a curious expression and a singular headdress.

From specimens of these amulets preserved in museums it is seen that any greenish stone was selected, preferably those yielding a high, vitreous polish, as jadeite, turquoise, emerald, chlormelanite or precious serpentine. The color gave the sacred character, and this, it seems to me, was distinctly meant to be symbolic of water and its effects, the green of growing plants, and hence of fertility, abundance and prosperity.

**31.** There is another symbol, still venerated among the present indigenous population, which belongs to Nagualism, and is a survival from the ancient cult; this is the Tree. The species held in especial respect is the ceiba, the silk-cotton tree, the *ytzamatl* (knife-leaved paper tree) of the Nahuas, the *yax che* (green, or first tree) of the Mayas, the *Bombax ceiba* of the botanists. It is of great size and rapid growth. In Southern Mexico and Central America one is to be seen near many of the native villages, and is regarded as in some way the protecting genius of the town.

Sacred trees were familiar to the old Mexican cult, and, what is curious, the same name was applied to such as to the fire,

* Alva, *Confessionario en Lengua Mexicana*, fol. 9.

† Carriedo, *Estudios Historicos*, pp. 6, 7.

‡ In the *Revue d' Ethnographie*, Tom. iii, p. 313. Some very fine objects of this class are described by E. G. Squier, in his "Observations on the Chalchihuitl," in the *Annals of the Lyceum of Natural History*, Vol. i (New York, 1869).

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*Tota*, Our Father. They are said to have represented the gods of woods and waters.* In the ancient mythology we often hear of the "tree of life," represented to have four branches, each sacred to one of the four cardinal points and the divinities associated therewith.

The conventionalized form of this tree in the Mexican figurative paintings strongly resembles a cross. Examples of it are numerous and unmistakable, as, for instance, the cruciform tree of life rising from a head with a protruding tongue, in the Vienna Codex.†

**32.** Thus, the sign of the cross, either the form with equal arms known as the cross of St. Andrew, which is the oldest Christian form, or the Latin cross, with its arms of unequal length, came to be the ideogram for "life" in the Mexican hieroglyphic writing; and as such, with more or less variants, was employed to signify the *tonalli* or *nagual*, the sign of nativity, the natal day, the personal spirit.‡ The ancient document called the Mappe Quinatzin offers examples, and its meaning is explained by various early writers. The peculiar character of the Mexican ritual calendar, by which nativities were calculated, favored a plan of representing them in the shape of a cross; as we see in the singular *Codex Cruciformis* of the Boturini-Goupil collection.

**33.** But the doctrines of Nagualism had a phase even more detestable to the missionaries than any of these, an esoteric phase, which brought it into relation to the libidinous cults of Babylon and the orgies of the "Witches' Sabbaths" of the Dark Ages. Of these occult practices we of course have no detailed descriptions, but there are hints and half-glances which leave us in no doubt.

When the mysterious metamorphosis of the individual into his or her *nagual* was about to take place, the person must

* Diego Duran, *Historia de los Indios de Nueva España*, Tom. ii, p. 140.

† In Kingsborough, *Antiquities of Mexico*, Vol. ii, Pl. 180. On the cross as a form derived from a tree see the observations of W. H. Holmes, in the *Second Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology*, pp. 270, 271.

‡ "Au Mexique, le cadre croisé, la croix en sautoir, comme celle de St. André, avec quelques variantes, representait le signe de nativité, *tonalli*, la fête, le jour natal." M. Aubin, in Boban, *Catalogue Raisonnée de la Collection Goupil*, Tom. i, p. 227. Both Gomara and Herrera may be quoted to this effect.

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strip to absolute nudity ;* and the lascivious fury of bands of naked Nagualists, meeting in remote glades by starlight or in the dark recesses of caves, dancing before the statues of the ancient gods, were scenes that stirred the fanaticism of the Spanish missionaries to its highest pitch. Bishop Landa informs us that in Yucatan the dance there known as the *naual* was one of the few in which both men and women took part, and that it "was not very decent." It was afterwards prohibited by the priests. We have excellent authority that such wild rites continued well into the present century, close to the leading cities of the State,† and it is highly likely that they are not unknown to-day.

**34.** Moreover, it is certain that among the Nagualists, one of their most revered symbols was the *serpent;* in Chiapas, one of their highest orders of the initiated was that of the *chanes*, or serpents. Not only is this in Christian symbolism the form and sign of the Prince of Evil and the enemy of God, but the missionaries were aware that in the astrological symbols of ancient Mexico the serpent represented the *phallus;* that it was regarded as the most potent of all the signs ; ‡ and modern research has shown, contrary to the opinion long held, that there was among these nations an extraordinary and extensive worship of the reciprocal principle of nature, associated with numerous phallic emblems.§

Huge phalli of stone have been discovered, one, for instance, on the Cerro de las Navajas, not far from the city of Mexico,

* See a curious story from native sources in my *Essays of an Americanist,* pp. 171, 172. It adds that this change can be prevented by casting salt upon the person.

† Benito Maria de Moxo, *Cartas Mejicanas*, p. 257 ; Landa, *Cosas de Yucatan*, p. 193.

‡ Pedro de los Rios, in his notes to the Codex Vaticanus, published in Kingsborough's great work, assigns the sign, *cohuatl*, the serpent, to "il membro virile, il maggio augurio di tutti gli altri." It is distinctly so shown on the 75th plate of the Codex. De la Serna states that in his day some of the Mexican conjurors used a wand, around which was fastened a living serpent. *Manual de Ministros*, p. 37.

§ There is abundant evidence of this in certain plates of the Codex Troano, and there is also alleged to be much in the Codex Mexicanus of the Palais Bourbon. Writing about the lat er, M. Aubin said as far back as 1841—"le culte du lingam on du phallus n'etait pas etranger aux Mexicains, ce qu' etablissent plusieurs documents peu connus et des sculptures découvertes depuis un petit nombre d'années." His letter is in Boban, *Catalogue Raisonné de la Collection Goupil*, Tom. ii, p. 207. On the frequent identification of the serpent symbol with the phallus in classical art, consult Dr. Anton Nagele's article, "Der Schlangen-Cultus," in the *Zeitschrift für Völkerpsychologie*, Band xvii, p. 285, *seq.*

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and another in the State of Hidalgo.* Probably they were used in some such ceremonies as Oviedo describes among the Nahuas of Nicaragua, where the same symbol was represented by conical mounds of earth, around which at certain seasons the women danced with libidinous actions. Although as a general rule the pottery of ancient Mexico avoids obscenity, Brasseur stated that he had seen many specimens of a contrary character from certain regions,† and Dr. Berendt has copied several striking examples, showing curious *yoni* symbols, which are now in my possession.

We may explain these as in some way connected with the worship of Pantecatl, the male divinity who presided over profligate love, and of Tlazolteotl, the *Venus Impudica* of the Aztec pantheon; and it is not without significance that the cave-temple of Votan, whose contents were destroyed by the Bishop of Chiapas, in 1691 (see above, p. 39), was located at *Tlazoaloyan*, both names being derived from a root signifying sexual action.‡ The other name of the divinity, called "the Heart of the Hills," is in Quiche, Alom, "he who begets," and the Zapotec Cozaana, another analogue of the same deity, is translated by Seler, "the Begetter." Such facts indicate how intimately the esoteric doctrines of Nagualism were related to the worship of the reproductive powers of nature.

**35.** It will readily be understood from what has been said that Nagualism was neither a pure descendant of the ancient cults, nor yet a derivative from Christian doctrines and European superstitions. It was a strange commingling of both, often in grotesque and absurd forms. In fact, the pretended Christianity of the native population of Mexico to-day is little more than a figment, according to the testimony of the most competent observers.§

The rituals and prayers of the nagualists bear witness to this. It is very visible in those I have quoted from Nuñez de

* Cf. G. Tarayre, *Exploration Mineralogique des Regions Mexicaines*, p. 233 (Paris, 1869), and *Bulletin de la Société d'Anthropologie de Paris*, Juin, 1893.

† *Sources de l'Histoire Primitive de Mexique*, p. 81.

‡ From *zo*, to join together. Compare my *Essays of an Americanist*, p. 417 (Philadelphia, 1890).

§ "El indio Mexicano es todavia idolatra." F. Pimentel, *La Situacion actual de la Raza Indigena de Mexico*, p. 197.

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la Vega, and I can add an interesting example of it which has not heretofore been published. I take it from the MSS. of Father Vicente Hernandez Spina, cura of Ixtlavacan, in Guatemala, a remote village of the Quiches. He wrote it down in the native tongue about forty years ago, as recited by an *ah-kih*, "reader of days," a native master of the genethliac art, who had composed it in favor of a client who had asked his intercession.

*Prayer of an Ah-Kih.*

"O Jesus Christ my God: thou God the Son, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, art my only God. To-day, on this day, at this hour, on this day Tihax, I call upon the holy souls which accompany the sun-rising and the sun-setting of the day: with these holy souls I call upon thee, O chief of the genii, thou who dwellest in this mountain of Siba Raxquin: come, ye holy spirits of Juan Vachiac, of Don Domingo Vachiac, of Juan Ixquiaptap, the holy souls of Francisco Excoquieh, of Diego Soom, of Juan Fay, of Alonzo Tzep; I call the holy souls of Diego Tziquin and of Don Pedro Noh: you, O priests, to whom all things are revealed, and thou, chief of the genii, you, lords of the mountains, lords of the plains, thou, Don Purupeto Martin, come, accept this incense, accept to-day this candle.*

"Come also, my mother Holy Mary, the Lord of Esquipulas, the Lord of Capetagua, the beloved Mary of Chiantla, with her who dwells at San Lorenzo, and also Mary of Sorrows, Mary Saint Anna, Mary Tibureia, Mary of Carmen, with Saint Michael the Archangel, the captain St. James, St. Christoval, St. Sebastian, St. Nicolas, St. Bonaventura, St. Bernardin, St. Andrew, St. Thomas, St. Bartholomew, and thou my beloved mother St. Catherine, thou beloved Mary of the Conception, Mary of the Rosary, thou lord and king Pascual, be here present.

"And thou, Frost, and thou, excellent Wind, thou, God of the plain, thou, God of Quiac-Basulup, thou, God of Retal-Uleu, thou, lord of San Gregorio, thou, lord of Chii-Masa. [These are mountains and localities, and in the original there follow the names of more than a hundred others. The prayer concludes as follows:]

". . . . I who appoint myself godfather and godmother, I who ask, I the witness and brother of this man who asks, of this man who makes himself your son, O holy souls, I ask, do not let any evil happen unto him, nor let him be unhappy for any cause.

"I the priest, I who speak, I who burn this incense, I who light this candle, I who pray for him, I who take him under my protection, I ask you that he may obtain his subsistence with facility. Thou, God, canst provide him with money; let him not fall ill of fever; I ask that he shall

* The "holy souls" who are here appealed to by name are those of deceased *ah-kih*, or priests of the native cult.

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not become paralytic; that he may not choke with severe coughing; that he be not bitten by a serpent; that he become neither bloated nor asthmatic; that he do not go mad; that he be not bitten by a dog; that he be not struck by lightning; that he be not choked with brandy; that he be not killed with iron, nor by a stick, and that he be not carried off by an eagle; guard him, O clouds; aid him, O lightning; aid him, O thunder; aid him, St. Peter; aid him, St. Paul; aid him, eternal Father.

"And I who up to this time have spoken for him to you, I ask you that sickness may visit his enemies. So order it, that when his enemies go forth from their houses, they may meet sickness; order it, that wherever they go, they may meet troubles; do your offices of injury to them, wheresoever they are met; do this that I pray, O holy souls. God be with you; God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit; Amen, Jesus."

Most of such invocations are expressed in terms far more recondite and symbolic than the above. We have many such preserved in the work of Jacinto de la Serna, which supply ample material to acquaint us with the peculiarities of the sacred and secret language of the nagualists. I shall quote but one, that employed in the curious ceremony of "calling back the *tonal*," referred to on a previous page. I append an explanation of its obscure metaphors.

### *Invocation for the Restitution of the Tonal.*

"Ho there! Come to my aid, mother mine of the skirt of precious stones![1] What keeps thee away, gray ghost, white ghost?[2] Is the obstacle white, or is it yellow? See, I place here the yellow enchantment and the white enchantment.[3]

"I, the Master of the Masters of enchantments, have come, I, who formed thee and gave thee life.[4] Thou, mother mine of the starry skirt, thou, goddess of the stars, who givest life, why hast thou turned against this one?[5]

"Adverse spirit and darkened star, I shall sink thee in the breadth and depth of the waters.[6] I, master of spells, speak to thee Ho there! Mother mine, whose skirt is made of gems, come, seek with me the shining spirit who dwells in the house of light,[7] that we may know what god or mighty power thus destroys and crushes to earth this unfortunate one. Green and black spirit of sickness, leave him and seek thy prey elsewhere.

"Green and yellow ghost, who art wandering, as if lost, over mountains and plains, I seek thee, I desire thee; return to him whom thou hast abandoned. Thou, the nine times beaten, the nine times smitten, see that thou fail me not.[8] Come hither, mother mine, whose robe is of precious

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gems; one water, two waters; one rabbit, two rabbits; one deer, two deers; one alligator, two alligators.[9]

"Lo! I myself am here; I am most furious; I make the loudest noise of all; I respect no one; even sticks and stones tremble before me. What god or mighty power dare face me, me, a child of gods and goddesses?[10] I have come to seek and call back the *tonal* of this sick one, wherever it is, whithersoever it has wandered, be it nine times wandered, even unto the nine junctures and the nine unions.[11] Wherever it is, I summon it to return, I order it to return, and to heal and clean this heart and this head."

### *Explanations.*

1. The appeal is to Water, regarded as the universal Mother. The "skirt of precious stones" refers to the green of the precious green stones, a color sacred to water.
2. The question is addressed to the *tonal*.
3. The yellow enchantment is tobacco; the white, a cup of water.
4. That is, assigned the form of the nagual belonging to the sick man.
5. This appeal is directed to the Milky Way.
6. The threat is addressed to the *tonal*, to frighten it into returning.
7. The "shining spirit" is the Fire-god.
8. The yellow tobacco, prepared ceremonially in the manner indicated.
9. These are names of days in the native calendar which are invoked.
10. The priest speaks in the person of his god.
11. Referring to the Nahuatl belief that there are nine upper and nine under worlds.

From the same work of de la Serna I collect the following list of symbolic expressions. It might easily be extended, but these will be sufficient to show the figurative obscurities which they threw around their formulas of conjuration, but which were by no means devoid of coherence and instruction to those who could understand them.

### *Symbolic Expressions of the Nagualists.*

*Blood.*—"The red woman with snakes on her gown" (referring to the veins).

*Copal Gum.*—"The white woman" (from the whitish color of the fresh gum).

*Cords* (for carrying burdens).—"The snake that does woman's work" (because women sit still to knit, and the cord works while itself is carried).

*Drunkenness.*—"My resting time," or "when I am getting my breath."

*The Earth.*—"The mirror that smokes" (because of the mists that rise

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from it); "the rabbit with its mouth upward" (the rabbit, in opposition to the one they see in the moon; with its mouth upward, because of the mists which rise from it like the breath exhaled from the mouth); "the flower which contains everything" (as all fruit proceeds from flowers, so does all vegetable life proceed from the earth, which is therefore spoken of as a flower); "the flower which bites the mouths" (a flower, for the reason given; it eats the mouths, because all things necessarily return to it, and are swallowed by it).

*Fingers.*—"The five fates," or "the five works," or "the five fields" (because by the use of his fingers man works out his own destiny. Hence also the worship of the Hand among the Nahuas as the god Maitl, and among the Mayas as the god Kab, both which words mean "hand").

*Fire.*—"Our Father of the Four Reeds" (because the ceremony of making the new fire was held on the day Four Reeds, 4 Acatl); "the shining rose;" "the yellow flyer;" "the red-haired one;" "the yellow spirit."

*A Knife of Copper.*—"The yellow Chichimec" (because the Chichimecs were alleged to tear out the bowels of their enemies).

*The Maguey Plant.*—"My sister, the eight in a row" (because it was planted in this manner).

*A Road.*—"That which is divided in two, and yet has neither beginning, middle nor end" (because it always lies in two directions from a person, and yet all roads lead into others and thus never end).

*Sickness.*—"The red woman;" "the breath of the flame;" "our mother the comet" (all referring to the fever); "the Chichimec" (because it aims to destroy life, like these savage warriors); "the spider" (because of its venomous nature).

*Smoke.*—"The old wife" (*i. e.*, of the fire).

*The Sun.*—"Our holy and pockified Uncle" (referring to the myth of Nanahuatl, who was syphilitic, and leaping into the flames of a fire rose as the sun).

*Tobacco.*—"The nine (or seven) times beaten" (because for sacred purposes it was rubbed up this number of times); "the enchanted gray one" (from its color and use in conjuring).

*Water.*—"The Green Woman" (from the greenness which follows moisture); "our Mother, whose robe is of precious stones" (from the green or vegetable life resembling the turquoise, emerald, jade, etc.).

**36.** It might be asked how the dark arts and secret ceremonies of the Nagualists escaped the prying eyes of the officers of the Holy Inquisition, which was established in Mexico in 1571. The answer is, that the inquisitors were instructed by Cardinal Diego de Espinosa, who at that time was Inquisitor General and President of the Council of the Indies, "to abstain from proceedings against Indians, because of their stupidity and

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incapacity, as well as scant instruction in the Holy Catholic faith, for the crimes of heresy, apostasy, heretical blasphemy, sorcery, incantations, superstitions," etc.

Energetic inquisitors, however, conceded very grudgingly this exemption. In the imposing *auto de fé* celebrated in the city of Mexico, in 1659, a half-breed, Bernardo del Carpio by name, son of a full-blood Indian mother, accused of blasphemy, etc., endeavored to escape the Holy Office by pleading his Indian blood; but his appeal was disallowed, and the precedent established that any admixture whatever of European blood brought the accused within the jurisdiction of the Inquisition.* Even this seems to have been a concession, for we find the record of an *auto de fé* held in 1609, in the province of Tehuantepec, in which eight full-blood natives were punished for worshiping the goddess Pinopiaa.† Mr. David Ferguson, however, who has studied extensively the records of the inquisition in Mexico, informs me that in none of the trials read by him has he observed any charges of Nagualism, although many white persons were accused, and some tried, for consulting Indian sorcerers.

**37.** It will be seen from what I have said, that the rites of Nagualism extended as widely as did the term over Mexico and Central America. It becomes, therefore, of importance to discover from what linguistic stock this term and its associated words are derived. From that source it is reasonable to suppose the rites of this superstition also had their origin.

The opinions on this subject have been diverse and positive. Most writers have assumed that it is a Nahuatl, or pure Mexican, word; while an eminent authority, Dr. Stoll, is not less certain that it is from a radical belonging to the neighboring great stock of the Mayan dialects, and especially the Quiche, of Guatemala.‡ Perhaps both these positions are erroneous, and we

* See the *Relacion del Auto celebrado en Mexico, año de* 1659 (Mexico, En la Imprenta del Santo Officio, 1659).

† J. B. Carriedo, *Estudios Historicos del Estado Oaxaqueno*, Tom. i, pp 8, 9 (Oaxaca, 1849). About 1640 a number of Indians in the province of Acapulco were put to death for having buried enchanted ashes beneath the floor of a chapel! (Serna, *Manual de Ministros*, p. 52.)

‡ "Nagual ist in seiner correcten Form *naoal* ein echtes Quiché-Wort, ein Substantivum instrumentale, vom Stamme *naó*, wissen, erkennen. *Naoal* ist dasjenige, womit oder woran etwas, in diesem Falle das Schicksal des Kindes, erkannt wird, und hat mit dem mexikanischen *nahualli* (Hexe), mit dem man es vielleicht in Verbindung bringen möchte, nichts zu schaffen." *Guatemala*, s. 238.

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must look elsewhere for the true etymology of these expressions. Unquestionably they had become domesticated in both Maya and Nahuatl; but there is some reason to think they were loan-words, belonging to another, and perhaps more venerable, civilization than either of these nations could claim.

To illustrate this I shall subjoin several series of words derived from the same radical which is at the basis of the word nagual, the series, three in number, being taken from the three radically diverse, though geographically contiguous, linguistic stocks, the Maya, the Zapotec and the Nahuatl.

### *From the Maya, of Yucatan.*

*Naual*, or *nautal*, a native dance, forbidden by the missionaries.
*Naatil*, talent, skill, ability.
*Naat*, intelligence, wisdom.
*Naatah*, to understand, to divine.
*Nanaol*, to consider. to contemplate, to meditate, to commune with oneself, to enter into oneself.
*Noh*, great, skillful; as *noh ahcah*, a skillful hunter.

### *From Maya Dialects.*

#### Quiche-Cakchiquel.

*Naual*, a witch or sorcerer.
*Naualin*, to tell fortunes, to predict the future.
*Qui naualin*, to sacrifice, to offer sacrifices.
*Na*, to feel, to suspect, to divine, to think in one's heart.
*Nao*, to know, to be alert or expert in something.
*Naol*, a skillful person, a rhetorician.
*Naotizan*, to make another intelligent or astute.
*Natal*, the memory.
*Natub*, the soul or shadow of a man.
*Noh*, the god of reason ("Genius der Vernunft," Scherzer).
*Noh*, to fecundate, to impregnate (*Popol Vuh*).

#### Tzental.

*X-qna*, to know.
*X-qnaulai*, to know often or thoroughly (frequentative).
*Naom*, wise, astute (*naom vinic*, hombre sabio).
*Naoghi*, art, science.
*Naoghibal*, memory.
*Ghnaoghel*, a wise man.
*Alaghom naom*, the Goddess of Wisdom.

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*From the Zapotec, of Oaxaca.*

*Nana, gana, gòna,* to know.
*Nona,* to know thoroughly, to retain in the memory.
*Nana ticha,* or *nona lii,* a wise man.
*Guela nana,* or *guela nona,* wisdom, knowledge.
*Hue gona,* or *ro gona,* a teacher, a master.
*Na lii,* truth ; *ni na lii,* that which is true.
*Naciña,* or *naciina,* skill, dexterity.
*Hui naa,* a medicine man, a "nagualist."
*Nahaa,* to speak pleasantly or agreeably.
*Nayaa,* or *nayapi,* to speak easily or fluently.
*Rigoo gona,* to sacrifice, to offer sacrifice.
*Ni nana,* the understanding, the intelligence, generally.
*Nayanii,* the superior reason of man.
*Nayaa, Naguii,* } superiority, a superior man (gentileza, gentil hombre).

*From the Nahuatl, of Mexico.*

*Naua,* to dance, holding each other by the hands.
*Naualli,* a sorcerer, magician, enchanter.
*Nauallotl,* magic, enchantment, witchcraft.
*Nauatl,* or *nahuatl,* skillful, astute, smart ; hence, superior ; applied to language, clear, well-sounding, whence (perhaps) the name of the tongue.
*Nauati,* to speak clearly and distinctly.
*Nauatlato,* an interpreter.

**38.** I believe that no one can carefully examine these lists of words, all taken from authorities well acquainted with the several tongues, and writing when they still retained their original purity, without acknowledging that the same radical or syllable underlies them all ; and further, that from the primitive form and rich development of this radical in the Zapotec, it looks as if we must turn to it to recognize the origin of all these expressions, both in the Nahuatl and the Maya linguistic stocks.

The root *na,* to know, is the primitive monosyllabic stem to which we trace all of them. *Nahual* means knowledge, especially mystic knowledge, the Gnosis, the knowledge of the hidden and secret things of nature ; easily enough confounded in uncultivated minds with sorcery and magic.*

* The Abbé Brasseur observes : "Le mot *nahual,* qui vet dire toute science, ou science de tout, est fréquemment employé pour exprimer la sorcellerie chez ces populations." *Bulletin de la Société de Géographie,* 1857, p. 290. In another passage of his works the speculative Abbé translates *naual* by the English "know all," and is not averse to believing that the latter is but a slight variant of the former.

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It is very significant that neither the radical *na* nor any of its derivatives are found in the Huasteca dialect of the Mayan tongue, which was spoken about Tampico, far removed from other members of the stock. The inference is that in the southern dialects it was a borrowed stem.

Nor in the Nahuatl language—although its very name is derived from it *—does the radical *na* appear in its simplicity and true significance. To the Nahuas, also, it must have been a loan.

It is true that de la Serna derives the Mexican *naualli*, a sorcerer, from the verb *nahualtia*, to mask or disguise oneself, "because a *naualli* is one who masks or disguises himself under the form of some lower animal, which is his *nagual*;" † but it is altogether likely that *nahualtia* derived its meaning from the custom of the medicine men to wear masks during their ceremonies.

Therefore, if the term *nagual*, and many of its associates and derivatives, were at first borrowed from the Zapotec language, a necessary corrollary of this conclusion is, that along with these terms came most of the superstitions, rites and beliefs to which they allude; which thus became grafted on the general tendency to such superstitions existing everywhere and at all times in the human mind.

Along with the names of the days and the hieroglyphs which mark them, and the complicated arithmetical methods by means of which they were employed, were carried most of the doctrines of the Nagualists, and the name by which they in time became known from central Mexico quite to Nicaragua and beyond.

The mysterious words have now, indeed, lost much of their ancient significance. In a recent dictionary of the Spanish of Mexico *nagual* is defined as "a witch; a word used to frighten children and make them behave," ‡ while in Nicaragua, where the former Nahuatl population has left so many traces of its presence in the language of to-day, the word *nagual* no longer means an actor in the black art, or a knowledge of it, but his or her

* See an article by me, entitled "On the Words 'Anahuac' and 'Nahuatl,'" in the *American Antiquarian*, for November, 1893.

† *Manual de Ministros*, p. 50.

‡ Jesus Sanchez, *Glosario de Voces Castellanas derivadas del Idioma Nahuatl*, sub voce.

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armamentarium, or the box, jar or case in which are kept the professional apparatus, the talismans and charms, which constitute the stock in trade or outfit of the necromancer.*

Among the Lacandons, of Mayan stock, who inhabit the forests on the upper waters of the Usumacinta river, at the present day the term *naguate* or *nagutlat* is said to be applied to any one "who is entitled to respect and obedience by age and merit;" † but in all probability he is also believed to possess superior and occult knowledge.

**39.** All who have any acquaintance with the folk-lore of the world are aware that the notion of men and women having the power to change themselves into beasts is as wide as superstition itself and older than history. It is mentioned in the pages of Herodotus and in the myths of ancient Assyria. It is the property of African negroes, and the peasantry of Europe still hold to their faith in the reality of the were-wolf of Germany, the *loup-garou* of France and the *lupo mannaro* of Italy. Dr. Richard Andrée well says in his interesting study of the subject: "He who would explain the origin of this strange superstition must not approach it as a national or local manifestation, but as one universal in its nature; not as the property of one race or family, but of the species and its psychology at large." ‡

Even in such a detail as the direct connection of the name of the person with his power of change do we find extraordinary parallelisms between the superstition of the red man of America and the peasant of Germany. As in Mexico the *nagual* was assigned to the infant by a form of baptism, so in Europe the peasants of east Prussia hold that if the godparent at the time of naming and baptism thinks of a wolf, the infant will acquire the power of becoming one; and in Hesse to pronounce the name of the person in the presence of the animal into which he has been changed will restore him to human shape. §

**40.** I need not say that the doctrine of personal spirits is not especially Mexican, nor yet American; it belongs to man in

* "*Nagual*—el lugar, rincon, cajon, nambira, etc., donde guarda sus talismanes y trajes de encanta la bruja." Berendt, *La Lengua Castellana de Nicaragua*, MS.

† Emetorio Pineda, *Descripcion Geografica de Chiapas y Soconusco*, p. 23 (Mexico, 1845).

‡ See his article "Wer-wolf," in his *Ethnographische Parallelen und Vergleiche*, p. 62, *seq.*

§ Richard Andrée, *ibid.*, ss. 63, 64.

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general, and can be recognized in most religions and many philosophies. In ancient Greece both the Platonicians and later the Neo-Platonicians thought that each individual has a particular spirit, or *daimōn*, in whom is enshrined his or her moral personality. To this *daimōn* he should address his prayers, and should listen heedfully to those interior promptings which seem to arise in the mind from some unseen silent monitor.*

Many a member of the Church of Rome substitutes for the *daimōn* of the Platonists the patron saint after whom he is named, or whom he has chosen from the calendar, the hagiology, of his Church. This analogy did not fail to strike the early missionaries, and they saw in the Indian priest selecting the *nagual* of the child a hideous and diabolical caricature of the holy rites.

But what was their horror when they found that the similarity proceeded so far that the pagan priest also performed a kind of baptismal sacrament with water; and that in the Mexican picture-writing the sign which represents the natal day, the *tonal*, by which the individual demon is denoted, was none other than the sign of the cross, as we have seen. This left no doubt as to the devilish origin of the whole business, which was further supported by the wondrous thaumaturgic powers of its professors.

**41.** How are we to explain these marvelous statements? It will not do to take the short and easy road of saying they are all lies and frauds. The evidence is too abundant for us to doubt that there was skillful jugglery among the proficients in the occult arts among those nations. They could rival their colleagues in the East Indies and Europe, if not surpass them.

Moreover, is there anything incredible in the reports of the spectators? Are we not familiar with the hypnotic or mesmeric conditions in which the subject sees, hears and feels just what the master tells him to feel and see? The tricks of cutting oneself or others, of swallowing broken glass, of handling venomous reptiles, are well-known performances of the sect of the Aissaoua in northern Africa, and nowadays one does not have to go off the boulevards of Paris to see them repeated. The phenomena of thought transference, of telepathy, of clairvoy-

* See Alfred Maury, *La Magie et l'Astrologie*, pp. 88, 89, 267, etc.

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ance, of spiritual rappings, do but reiterate under the clear light of the close of the nineteenth century the mystical thaumaturgy with which these children of nature were familiar centuries ago in the New World, and which are recorded of the theosophists and magicians of Egypt, Greece and Rome.* So long as many intelligent and sensible people among ourselves find all explanations of these modern phenomena inadequate and unsatisfactory, we may patiently wait for a complete solution of those of a greater antiquity.

**42.** The conclusion to which this study of Nagualism leads is, that it was not merely the belief in a personal guardian spirit, as some have asserted; not merely a survival of fragments of the ancient heathenism, more or less diluted by Christian teachings, as others have maintained; but that above and beyond these, it was a powerful secret organization, extending over a wide area, including members of different languages and varying culture, bound together by mystic rites, by necromantic powers and occult doctrines; but, more than all, by one intense emotion—hatred of the whites—and by one unalterable purpose—that of their destruction, and with them the annihilation of the government and religion which they had introduced.

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* In the *Notice Preliminaire* to the second part of his work, *La Magie et l'Astrologie dans l'Antiquité et au Moyen Age*, Mr. Alfred Maury admirably sums up the scientific resources at our command for explaining the mystical phenomena of experience, without denying their reality as actual occurrences.

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